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ELIZABETH'S FORTUNE.

CHAPTER X.

A FIRST NIGHT.

“PLAYERS.” Forsooth, we answer to that name. Gamblers, plying our trade on the boundary-lines of glory and of ridicule, each fresh step as it were a fresh toss for sky-high praise or rank abuse. No stage prophet can foretell which will come up. If you live by this gaming-table you must get hardened to its risks, else you would grow old and worn out in no time. But I was a novice, dreaded public notice, public neglect, stood in awe of Gifford’s sarcasm, sickened at the thought of the papers. A prey to legions of terrors, I left my dressing-room that memorable First Night—white-frocked, short-waisted, puffed-sleeved, mob-capped—wearing a make-believe smile of self-security as Gifford ran his eye over his rustic heroine from top to toe, as you cast up a bill. Was I right? I caught Graves’ aside to him :

“I’m hung if she doesn’t look it better than Annie Torrens!” and I thought Gifford nodded. Ah, this time I took no offence. Dramatic ambition lay low. Too glad to be admitted to do something better than somebody, I blessed my good stature, bright cheeks, young looks, if only they would help to put people in a good temper with me, and myself to pass muster as Gifford’s heroine.

“The house is brim full,” announced Graves—elaborately got up as the first villain of the first piece—reconnoitring through the curtain, “and by Jove! there they are in Box B.”

“Where, where?” asked Davenant, craning his neck to see, unseen. Not for worlds would he spoil the effect of his *entrée* to a single spectator by affording a premature glimpse of himself in his becoming scarlet hunting coat. “I knew the duchess would be as good as her word.”

“Duchess? Bosh, man! I mean the enemy. See there. Three strong.”

In a box dangerously near the stage appeared, not Annie herself, but certain supposed emissaries of hers from the Métropole, swashing young sprigs of effrontery, among whom I recognized my tormentor of the other night. "Looks ugly," Graves remarked. "It's war to the tooth and the nail."

"Why, what can they do?" asked James Romney, who played second villain, and the studious villainy of whose appearance no stranger to him could duly appreciate.

"Not shy rotten eggs or brickbats," returned Graves. "But look out for knavish tricks. If a hitch comes, or a scene flags, Gifford's a dead man—I mean, the play's a d——d play." To which cheerful prediction the curtain rose on the opening tableau. Here, here alone, success was a foregone conclusion.

May Day. A spreading chestnut tree in spring leaf, decked with flowers and festoons, standing amid pale green copsewood and primroses, whilst away down the dell loomed the turrets and chimneys of the manor. Village lasses and lads dancing to the strains of the blind fiddler seated on a barrel, piper by his side, children lolling on the grass, and a couple of lazy loons looking on.

The merry-makers go off to fetch the May Queen, and the loiterers, Reuben and Jethro, open the piece in Hampshire dialect. Only James Romney gave the genuine twang, but as with the real pig's squeak of old, the effect it produced was *nil* as compared with Beattie Graves' imitation.

The rogues—for precious rogues they both are, though holding positions of trust on the manor—are in no holiday humour. Squire Lilford has long been away in London, ill and on the shelf, whilst thievish dependants grew rich. The unannounced arrival of his son Lionel has discomfited the rascally pair, threatens their doings with exposure, themselves with ruin—Botany Bay!

How to master their master, by force or by fraud? Jethro has discovered that young Lionel is secretly courting May Aston, the village beauty. Like father, like son! There was talk long ago about the squire and Dinah the handsome gipsy, years before she married Forrest, the gamekeeper. Some years later Forrest was shot in a poaching fray. And Reuben hints at a dark secret he holds, which if known would blast the name of Lilford. Dinah suddenly left the village and her child. Gone back to her tribe, it was believed; but the squire, according to Reuben, knew better. He saw her at the manor, arranged for her disappearance, and undertook to provide in the village for the dead gamekeeper's son, Zed, who at this point emerges from the copse.

As Charlotte Hope stepped into sight, a short sharp burst of applause followed as spontaneously as the report of a gun follows the pulling of the trigger. How that rather hard-featured woman of thirty had managed this metamorphosis into a handsome

picturesque gipsy lad, only she and her dresser knew. Did they know? Mind's magic did more for Charlotte Hope than the artifice of a crisp black head of hair, clear olive complexion, drooping eyes, and darkened lids; form, face, voice seemed freshly created by a new spirit. The idea of this young Ishmaelite, with the inborn, anti-social devil in him dormant only because hitherto unprovoked, was flashed upon the dullest conceptions, from the first, vividly as a whole, and held them up to the last by fresh touches of reality in the minutest particulars. Box B, striking up a conversation, elicited such fierce hushes as forced the occupants to reserve their shots for a better opportunity.

The rascals—whose villainy is relieved by a vein of rustic comicality running through the hypocrisy of the smooth-faced Reuben and the blunt ruffianism of his fellow—propose to make Zed their tool. He loves May Aston; Jethro insinuates to him that his hopes are likely to be baffled by a selfish, false-hearted profligate. The lad, incensed and incredulous, is bidden to watch.

Now the *cortège* returns, escorting the May Queen. My entrance was instantaneously followed by a stir in the house that fluttered me vastly. Then came a loud whisper from Box B. "The Duchess, Mr. Pemberton, and Lady Mabel." My *entrée* was spoilt, but at least it was a duchess who had done the mischief.

The holiday-makers disperse to go primrosing in the woods. Now comes the confirmation of Jethro's suspicion—Lionel Lilford, to take from the hollow of the tree May's note promising to slip away from her comrades and come to the tryst. She comes, and a pretty idyllic scene follows between the lovers. Lionel asks implicit trust, which May seems ready to accord. Zed has followed, watched unseen the exchange of fond words and vows, and when the two are gone he reappears before us, already another creature from the harmless, dreamy youngster of half an hour ago. Reuben's venomous secret, now poured into his ears, completes the work of turning the boy into a savage. Zed learns that the death of his father, Forrest the gamekeeper, lies at Squire Lilford's door. Shot by poachers; but Reuben holds proof that it was a trap, and the squire wrote the letter to bring him there. Motive, the black-eyed Dinah, thus left widowed and free.

On Zed's passionate nature the poison of suspicion and jealousy works with a violence that bids fair to serve the desperate ends of the rogues who are driving him on. Any one but Charlotte must have fallen back on rant and well-worn tricks—it was the original simplicity of her performance that surprised and riveted the most *blasés* play-goers present. And the gipsy's cunning betrays nothing when May and her village companions reappear, primrose laden, and the May Queen, called on to choose a partner for the village feast at the farm, refuses Hob and Dick,

and chooses Zed, her old playmate ; he leads her off, the rest follow, Lionel looking on, and the act ends as it began, in Arcadia, but for the Arcadians.

Ask a soldier in the thick of the action how it is going, but not a player half-way through a first night. There was Miss Hope, usually cool as a cucumber in the green-room, looking for nervous excitement nearly as dangerous as Zed on the stage. Davenant, for once pre-occupied with his part, had actually noted no more about the Duchess and her daughter than that they were remarkably attentive. Francis Gifford was one to seem caustic and cool whilst being led to execution, yet he freely owned afterwards he could never think of that evening without a shudder. For he had invited us all, and Mr. Danvers besides, to a supper at the Métropole, "in a moment of madness," said Beattie Graves to me in an ominous whisper. "If the play fails—which it very well may yet—why, a corpse might as well preside at his own funeral feast."

Tableau II., the chestnut tree in full blossom, took the house by storm. Many, who never noticed when real chestnuts flowered, or dreamt of stopping to admire them, were ravished by the scenic representation. The plot thickens, and the audience are on tenter-hooks of suspense lest such a nice engaging young fellow as Lionel should turn out such a consummate scoundrel as it would appear was the old squire before him.

Zed, playing into the rogues' hands, has possessed himself of the particulars of their secret. Only love holds revenge in check, and if by a lover's appeal to May he can yet prevail over his hated rival, Reuben and Jethro will be cheated of their tool. So he pours out his whole heart to the girl, who has never thought of him but as a foster-brother.

Box B. had been so tranquil awhile that our apprehensions on that score were half forgotten ; when just at this point—the thrilling point, when Zed has made a tremendous confession of the love that has grown up with him and possesses him, contrasting the strength of his passion with Lionel's light wooing, the point where Zed's rescue from crime and Lionel's life seem to hang on May's reply—somebody in that box sneezed aloud. Such a terribly comic sneeze !—and at a moment when, had the audience laughed, I, nay Charlotte Hope herself, must have been fatally disconcerted. Fear for a moment froze my lips, as I listened for the laugh ; it came not, and the panic subsided in an instant. Engrossed by what was passing on the stage, the spectators had positively not heard the sound so terrifying to the players.

Zed's passionate wooing is in vain ; May's heart has gone beyond recall to her high-born lover. The gipsy's strange threats are scouted by Lionel with haughty defiance ; and maddened by resentment, Zed throws in his lot with the Lilford haters. The

old squire is reported dying, and Lionel called suddenly away. The plot now threatens his life, should he return, and Zed is drawn in by a last hope that by working on May's fears for her lover he may force her to renounce him.

Tableau III. September morning; the trees and woods in russet autumn tints. Squire Lilford is dead, and Lionel, returning to the manor to-day, unsuspecting of danger, encounters Zed. The gipsy, who has failed to extort anything from May, who discredits his wild talk, violently denounces the dead squire to his son as a murderer, and Lionel himself as May's betrayer.

On his own head recoils the bolt. Lionel holds from his dying father a paper containing the vindication of the accused in the written and witnessed confession of the real culprit, Dinah Forrest.

She wrote the pretended letter from the squire that brought her husband to his doom. One among the poachers was a gipsy tramp with whom she desired to return to her tribe, but the vagabond was killed by a chance shot in the fray. The squire suspecting Dinah, she threw herself on the mercy of one who had loved her long ago. He spared her from justice, requiring her to leave the country and Forrest's child, whom he desired to be brought up among honest people, ignorant of his mother's crime. Her confession to be used only in case of need.

Lionel's own acquittal is equally complete. To-morrow all the village shall know that May Aston is his wedded wife, made his in all due though secret ceremony three months ago.

An untoward incident here threatened us with dire disaster. Davenant, excellently suited in the part of the light-hearted, amiable, kind, rather shallow young squire, had a curious metallic ring in his voice at the rare moments when, forgetting himself, he raised it too high. An unnoticeable trifle, but that immediately a grotesque mimicking echo broke from Box B. Now I felt if they imitated me I should die on the spot. An hour earlier the trick might have served its end, but by now the audience were emphatically on our side against the opposition. "Turn him out!" The pit gave the word, and the offender only escaped summary ejection by prompt disappearance. Thenceforward we feared nothing more.

Tableau IV. Evening. In this final scene, Zed, though inextricably entangled by his ruffianly associates in their designs on the life of his successful but, as he now knows, honourable rival, is smitten by a tardy remorse. Lionel has a last tryst with May this evening under the chestnut, and will come first to the tree. But fatal accidents happen sometimes, and every one knows the young squire's careless way of carrying firearms. To-morrow all will know how he stumbled coming through the copse, and his gun went off and killed him.

Reuben and Jethro are in ambush in the brushwood; Zed, concealed in the dell, is to give the signal of Lionel's approach by

throwing a stone into a pool. They have no suspicion of the struggle going on in his mind, and fierce jealousy has prevailed over his better nature, until it is too late to stop the shot from being fired that will free the hand of May.

Theplash of a stone is heard, a figure seen advancing towards the trysting-tree; the shot is fired with fatal effect. The time to rush up, drop the squire's gun, abstracted from the manor, beside their victim, and to make off, unaware of their mistake. For as the terrified May hurries on from the one side, up the dell comes Lionel, alive and unhurt. The victim is the gipsy boy, driven by a generous impulse of repentant heroism to save his rival's life by the sacrifice of his own. Zed dies, but soothed by the forgiveness of the lovers.

The fall of the curtain was followed by an uproar that bespoke a success of the sort no one is ever so audacious as to anticipate. Criticism was nowhere. Time to-morrow to discover that there was nothing in the play, after all, to justify the impression made, and that, apart from some pretty scenery and rustic colouring and clever writing, the sensation produced was due entirely to a character written expressly to display the peculiar powers of an exceptional actress. Enough that it was an extraordinarily successful play. The chief dramatic honours were for Charlotte Hope, of course; but amid the deafening applause that greeted us as we passed before the curtain not the least share fell to the astonished and trembling young person who at the last moment had been substituted for a popular favourite in the part of the heroine, May.

Behind the curtain reigned an excitement no less intense.

"A hit, a palpable hit," said Beattie Graves, bringing down his hand with a patronizing slap on Gifford's shoulder.

But as he spoke he looked at the actress whose performance to-night by its startling realism and pathos had thus carried the spectators out of themselves, as we all felt, and Mr. Gifford was the first to declare.

"You have added a new figure to the stage," he said, with more demonstrative earnest than his wont. It was the fact, but the creation had been at a great cost. She heard plaudits and compliments without pleasure, her overstrung nerves made of every feeling a pain. Inured though she was to a pretty incessant strain on the emotions, now and then some fresh and exceptional effort, as to-night, would leave her half distraught.

"You look tired," said Davenant compassionately, whose exertions were not of a kind to tax him over-severely. She threw an odd glance at him.

"I could commit a murder," she said, forcing a laugh at herself, but beginning to recover her balance.

"Try supper first, at the Métropole," said Mr. Gifford.

"Danvers will meet us there in half an hour, and I've seen some one else I think I must invite."

The instant I re-entered the green-room after changing my dress I was accosted by a familiar, but unexpected voice.

"Good evening, Miss Adams. I really must congratulate you on the progress you have made. You played extremely well, let me tell you."

It was Mr. Slater. Great was my surprise. Merely from his tone it appeared how I had risen in his estimation. Always friendly, to-night he was courtesy itself, and kept me talking, questioning me about the parts I had acted, till at length Miss Hope, for whom we were waiting, joined us.

"How you come swooping down upon us like a hawk!" thus she greeted the new-comer, who answered her knowingly:

"Hawk, eh? Come to pounce on you all and carry you off? I don't say no. We'll talk about that as we go to the Métropole: you, Mr. Gifford, and I, and—" I verily believe he was going to offer me his arm, but I pretended not to see, as I took Mr. Romney's, which chanced to present itself at the same moment.

"Who's that *fellow*?" asked my cavalier, with marked disapproval, as we followed the others down the road leading to the Métropole.

"Not so loud. I'll tell you all about him. But be careful, I warn you. Be very civil to him."

"Civil to that low-conditioned—cur? As impudent a cad as I ever came across."

"Hush, hush! What can you mean? He's a London manager. All London managers are nice, kind, polished, discriminating gentlemen," I remonstrated laughing.

James Romney chimed in unwillingly with the laugh. "Well, he's a party I'd rather not have dealings with. What does he want here?"

"I don't know," said I mysteriously, "but I can guess."

"Seems almost as if you were glad to see him."

"Perhaps I am," said I cheerfully. "Perhaps we ought all to be. We shall know by-and-by."

For I rightly guessed he had a plank of deliverance to offer to our manageress. Without admiring Mr. Slater, I thought Mr. Romney's epithets exaggerated. Indeed I was so elated, so foolishly happy all round, that I saw everything in the sunshine. As to Mr. Danvers, who joined us on the stairs at the Métropole and placed an enormous bouquet in my hands, my heart went out to him as a sort of stage-deity, (it was my first bouquet) though I was more flattered than gratified by his next move, which was summarily to usurp the place of my partner.

Scarcely were we shut into the room reserved for our party when the door burst open, and to the astonishment of everybody in rushed Annie Torrens impulsively, an enchanting picture, with

her auburn hair, brown eyes, and white shoulders gleaming startlingly through the black lace and net of a coquettish dress, and with a general air of Froufrou repentant come back to the fold.

"Where are they? where are they?" she cried excitedly; then hastening up to the author of the "*Greenwood Tree*" she took his hand, saying effusively :

"Mr. Gifford, I *must* congratulate you. A glorious success, I hear. Don't suppose I bear malice because of our quarrel. Will you, can you forgive me for being so tiresome, now I own I was in the wrong from the beginning?"

Gifford—all present, indeed—tempers sweetened by triumph, heads dazed by her brilliant appearance—succumbed to her humble apologetic attitude. He shook hands with a good grace.

"You did make me angry," she went on with easy frankness, "and after the way I behaved you had a full right to give the *rôle* to Elizabeth—to the bathing woman—if you chose. Just say I'm forgiven. I don't ask for the part back again, only for bygones to be forgotten."

"There, there," said Slater advancing, "I knew you'd make it all right. Now you're the very person I wanted to see." Annie, mournfully giving him one hand, resumed, holding out the other to Miss Hope :

"Charlotte, I'm very sorry to have caused you trouble and annoyance. There—that's all I came to say. Now I must go back to my party. Dear, how merry you all look!" and she glanced wistfully round. "Don't heap coals of fire on my head by inviting me to supper. I couldn't stay, either."

Of course we invited her, and of course she stayed. At table a place of honour was assigned me, between the millionaire and the manager. Mr. Romney was far away at the other end, next to Annie, who, as one still somewhat in disgrace, submitted meekly to this order of things.

Mr. Slater made no secret of his business among us. The success of the piece had determined him to make Miss Hope a good offer for her rights in it, which her entangled position forced her to close with at once. Henceforth Mr. Slater would take the command, and in a week we should leave Plymstone for a tour in the provinces under his generalship. The actors had everything to gain from this change of paymaster, only Annie, demurring, inquired what was to be done about the part of May.

"Because, after all, if the new piece is to be the chief attraction on tour, it would be positively disadvantageous to me to be left out of it."

"What I shall propose," rejoined Slater, "is that you and Miss Adams shall act the part alternately, till one of you voluntarily surrenders it."

"I cannot object to that," said Annie. The matter dropped,

the general conversation broke up, every one conversing with his neighbour, Mr. Danvers with me.

"How about him?" I heard Miss Hope ask of Slater, aside, designating Mr. Romney.

"What, the amateur? His engagement is by the week, isn't it? Tell him he won't be wanted any more."

"He's clever, you know," she urged.

"So much the worse. He'll be wanting to play leading business."

"Can't you find a berth for him somewhere?" she asked with helpless compunction.

"Quite impossible, my dear lady. I never take amateurs, as you know, without a good round sum down. Send him about his business. It isn't stage business," and he laughed drily. "I'm a business man, and I fancy he and I won't agree."

"Eh, is it Romney you're talking of?" struck in Mr. Danvers innocently. "You'll not keep him now. He's a young man of family, you see, and his family want him back, and he's off. I know the ins and outs of it. He came down here for a bit of fun, which is all very well in its way. Now he's had his fling out, sees he must have done with funning, and home he goes."

"Much the best thing he could do," the three concluded in chorus.

Through the gaiety that possessed me, it struck home—the dismal assurance! First, Mr. Romney would leave. Worse, he would leave willingly, having fallen out, at first sight, with our future manager. Worst, he was going home to forget what, after all, had only been funning. He looked far from unhappy at this moment, with Annie beside him, who had never paid him the slightest notice before, making the most unblushing efforts to be charming in her way. Of course I wasn't jealous. Of course I knew her ways must repel him as vulgar; and surely her arts were transparent! Was it possible, in reason, whilst seeing through an artifice, none the less to be swayed by it? At nineteen I thought not. Yet he seemed well amused, and not displeased by her advances. No girl of spirit would mope out of pique. I must try and make myself pleasant to chatty, cheery Mr. Danvers, who was all affability. Slater, my other neighbour, kept one ear upon us almost as though he were my guardian, but only spoke to chime in, in our own vein. My spirits rose, though I was anything but gay at heart. Supper over, the smokers, including Miss Hope, flocked out on the wide balcony facing the sea. Just inside the open windows I sat on an ottoman, when Annie came to nestle beside me. Mr. Romney, about to step out on the balcony, had halted between her and the window.

"Lizzie," she began in a light mischievous tone, "you're a deep girl. Little Bulstrode told me of the set-down you gave him the other night. How we laughed! I thought you were

simple. I did you injustice." Leaning her head towards mine, she whispered confidentially, " You fly high, dear. Pretty well played, I declare, for a chit like you ! "

" I am perfectly unconscious, Miss Torrens, to what you allude," I answered aloud, stiff as buckram, and very angry already. I had no secret confidences with Annie, and preferred that Mr. Romney should know it.

She shrugged her pretty shoulders expressively. " Oh, well, if you'd rather," she retorted maliciously. Suddenly looking up at him, she went on in playful appeal, " Now look here, Mr. Romney, isn't it hard ? Ever since we came down have Charlotte and I been trying as hard as we can to captivate the *Cresus* of Plymstone. Not a word or a look has he got for either of us, and at last we know why. It's this child here has appropriated him as her special admirer. I call it rough upon Charlotte and me. Don't you think so, Mr. Romney ? "

" What does Miss Adams say ? " he replied with decided constraint.

Miss Adams said nothing ; she was too indignant, and a little hurt by his manner. She did the worst thing she possibly could—looked daggers at Annie and avoided looking at Mr. Romney at all.

" How he came out at supper ! " she continued. " Do tell us how you manage. For my part, I can never find a word to say to him. Give me a lesson, dear, in the art of difficult conquests."

" You require no teaching," I retorted provoked. " As for the arts of conquest, easy or difficult, I leave them to—to—other people."

Had I not seen her all supper-time trying her mean arts on Mr. Romney in brazen fashion ? and it stung me not to see him treat them and her with the lofty contempt I vow they deserved.

Annie, leaning across, whispered mysteriously with looks of soft mischief, " Isn't it conquest when you wheedle a thousand pounds out of a middle-aged gentleman as if it was sixpence, to help a middle-aged lady-bankrupt out of a scrape ? Why didn't Charlotte ask for herself ? "

" It was only five hundred ! " No, I didn't say that. She might be making random shots to drive me into some unguarded admission that would satisfy her curiosity as to how Charlotte had extricated herself from her plight.

" Do you know what you are talking about ? " said I simply, looking her full in the face. Baffled but unabashed she replied;

" Perhaps my informant was mistaken. But in that case, Lizzie, take you care. No flirt like an old flirt, you know. Tonight he's all attention to you, but this very afternoon he was drinking tea in his garden with a young lady, Mr. Romney tells me."

" Mr. Romney tells you ? " I repeated perplexed. Then it flashed

on me who had been the visitor, whose card had been brought to Mr. Danvers during our interview : Mr. Romney—calling, doubtless, to consult him about his home affairs, and who had known then no more than myself who the other visitor was. He knew now ; my countenance disguised nothing. Annie burst out laughing, exasperating me afresh. I had promised Mr. Danvers to keep his counsel, so could explain nothing, nor just then would I have stooped to explain if I could. Once again Annie bent over me with mocking looks and that whisper which drove me frantic.

"Oh, you sly little person ! Perhaps you'll deny it now ?"

"I deny your right to ask questions," I said hotly and aloud.

Throwing herself back on the sofa laughing, she exclaimed loudly, as in dismay, "Oh, hush, hush, my dear ! don't talk that way. What will Mr. Romney think ?"

"Mr. Romney may think what he pleases," said I deliberately, only preserving decent composure by feigning utter unconcern. "I don't care." I had scarce spoken the words when I repented them, but just then the party trooped in from the balcony and broke up our dialogue.

"Her first success has quite turned her head," I heard Annie declare to her neighbour, who had not stirred. "She hasn't a civil word for you or for me, only for tip-top swells."

There was no more use in being seriously angry with Annie than with a mechanical toy that has scrunched your finger in some of its graceful evolutions. I know it now, but who is quite wise at nineteen ? For the remaining half-hour she pertinaciously devoted herself to Mr. Romney, who perversely pretended to be under the charm. Was it all pretence at last ? As perversely I feigned to relish the honour of being the object of our patron's rather conspicuous attentions. A perfectly harmless, kindly-intentioned, simple-minded man, I felt sure, was Mr. Danvers.

Nor was I mistaken. He was the very pattern of propriety in all respects, save one, of which I was unaware : a desire to pass for something different in the eyes of the world. Why a worthy old gentleman of respectable tastes and habits should go out of his way to be supposed fast and rakish, and not object to have his name coupled with that of some brazen ballet-dancer, some beauty of light reputation, to this day passes my simple understanding. He gave himself the airs of a lady-killer, and got credit for several perfectly fictitious adventures. Certainly in these cases the ladies concerned did not trouble themselves what was said, whilst in mine he was merely profiting by the chance offered him by a pretty nobody of keeping up his character as a squire of dames.

He never left my side till we parted at the door of the Swan. Then Slater kept me chatting till, ten minutes after, we separated, Mr. Romney and I contending which should say "Good night" with the coolest unconcern. I think the honours were divided.

Alone in my room, too excited to cry, I felt in a fever, and sat up

an hour by the open window—heedless of the chill mists creeping in, and that I had caught cold already in the draughty theatre—longing for the morrow, yet oppressed by a dead certainty it would bring no good thing. Wherever I looked all was ugly and distorted. Annie's shameless spite and assurance, their easy influence on James Romney, Mr. Danvers' patronizing courtesies absurdly misconstrued—no wonder I tripped and bungled—I was walking in a new and altogether a wickeder world.

Sunday morning I woke unable to lift my head from my pillow, with a distracting headache, but that was nothing. The mortal illness I felt sure must be coming on declared itself in the course of the day as a bad influenza cold, and towards evening I revived. At six Miss Hope came in to ask how I did.

"Better," said I. "I am going to get up and come down to dinner."

"That's right. There's a rehearsal called for ten o'clock to-morrow. We've a new Jethro. Mr. Romney has gone."

I dared not try to speak; words would have choked me.

"He had a telegram from his sister hurrying him away." She paused and then added, "He'd never have hit it off with Slater, you know. They got to loggerheads this morning as it was. He seemed sorry to leave, but it's just as well"—"for you both," said something in her tone.

There was no choice for me but to betray the utter senseless misery I felt, or else to feign utter indifference, which I did.

"Much the best thing he could do," I said, as they all had said last night.

CHAPTER XI.

A CRISIS.

MISFORTUNE is of some service, they say, and certain it is that disappointment in you and in me has brought forth many a story and many a song which never would have been had you or I justified the expectations entertained of us by lover or friend. Critics, we know, are those who have failed in art and literature; artists very often those who have failed in friendship and love. All the same they would rather have succeeded.

I left Plymstone with my heart not broken but badly bruised. Better cause had I than Miss Alice for melancholy and beholding human nature under a cloud. True, I never declared James Romney the supreme fact of my existence, or dreamt myself for an instant the die on which his universe turned. It was only that he had behaved in a wrong and wounding way and shown how undeserving he was of the predilection I fortunately had *not* bestowed upon him. Had he taken offence at a something or a nothing? Was it "touch of hand, turn of head, vexed him?" as the poet has it. I wouldn't even ask. A pretty reason, in

plain prose. Shallow-hearted boy ! He had joined us for fun—good ; chosen to pay attention to me for fun—good ; and now the fun was over he had gone off in a huff, without so much as a friendly good-bye, or a hint or a sign that he was sorry to say it. Bad. Atrocious ! If this is his way at two-and-twenty, what will he be at thirty ? A perfect Mephistopheles, I suppose.

One little hope skulked in furtively. He might repent—might write a word. Easy to discover the whereabouts of the Shirley Slater comedy company if you wanted to ; easy to remain in ignorance if such was your choice. Alas ! he chose the latter.

I could not fold my hands and mope and pine, like a young lady. Our busy life gave me no time. Each day brought more work than it could hold, and if ever ambition's voice spoke with authority and seduction it spoke now. Wasn't the glorious dramatic profession before me, a candidate for its honours now in good earnest ? Sentiment was a shadow and a delusion ; but stage-success brought liberty, power, fame, ease—so many sterling advantages to set against a dream !

I threw myself into my parts, into other people's parts, into a life of storms—in teacups—as seriously engrossed in its least concerns, in first nights, receipts, cabals, rivalries, bickerings, as though they were matters of stake ; vastly more important to us were they than Irish Land Acts or the Eastern question. A six months' theatrical tour seems to imply a lot of change, but we carried our little world about with us, inseparable as a snail and its shell ; and many a stay-at-home gets more variety of existence. That world is all-absorbing, whatever the pity of being absorbed in what has, so to speak, only an after-dinner interest for other people. I too was a newly-admitted citizen ; with much ado to make the two ends meet, out of a salary inadequate to present expenses ; eager to justify my promotion, and with rising confidence in my powers. But public life, if it spreads vanity's wings to-day, is sure to clip them to-morrow.

From Plymstone to Bexeter, where "Zed"—for thus Slater, by leave of the author, who parted from us after the first few performances, had re-christened it—was played Monday and Tuesday, Annie and myself appearing alternately as the heroine, with moderate and pretty equal applause. Wednesday morning at rehearsal Graves came in with two newspapers, one for Annie, one for me. "Here's for you, ladies," he said presenting us with a notice apiece of the opening night.

The *Observer* was the Conservative, the *Gazette* the Liberal, organ of the town ; and they were at daggers drawn. Both must unite in praise of Miss Hope. But in the *Observer* I read on as follows :

"Miss Torrens is an ever-welcome favourite. Her inimitable grace and piquancy invested the part of May with a charm that only a finished actress can give. It

was with amazement that on Tuesday we found the rôle assumed by another actress, of crude pretensions. Making every allowance for the timidity of a novice, her obvious inexperience was a palpable blot on an otherwise harmonious performance."

Judge how small I looked! Annie meantime was reading in the *Gazette*:

"On Tuesday, a notable feature, second only to Miss Hope's gipsy, was the impersonation of the heroine by Miss Adams, a beginner, we are told. If so, she showed wonderful aptitude. She seems made for the part of the rustic beauty—the happiest contrast, in her naïve and exquisite, simplicity, to the stagey and affected rendering of Miss Torrens, who would do well to relinquish a part pre-eminently unsuited to her thoroughly artificial style."

Beattie Graves had his fun out of the sight of our wry faces, but the game had only begun. It was an insult to the audience, affirmed the *Observer*, in its Friday's issue, when such an accomplished actress as Miss Torrens was in the troupe, to substitute a *débutante*, ignorant of the rudiments of her art. A rich treat to all persons of taste, vowed the *Gazette*, to pass from the tricky and meretricious rendering of the May of Wednesday to the deliciously fresh and unconventional rendering of the May of Thursday. Friday night the theatre was packed—Annie's partizans to a man, for she got a startling ovation. Her "Dearest love" provoked acclamations; and when she said "Lionel, I love you," I thought the house would come down. She was crazy with elation, and I besought Slater's leave to resign the part, Bexeter having so emphatically declared for Annie. "Fudge," was the answer I got, but next night the May Queen was led on feeling more dead than alive.

Amazing! The applause burst forth louder than yesterday. The *Gazette* had sent its army, and my reception was so enthusiastic that the play could hardly be got through. On Monday the paper warfare was simply savage. At night, Annie appearing in the "Little Treasure," I in the "Sheep in Wolf's Clothing," got a reception apiece that the queens of our profession might have envied. Finally on the morrow, when we both appeared in the "Merry Wives," I as Mrs. Ford, Annie as Mrs. Page, the disturbance created by our respective admirers was such that the curtain had to be dropped. We and our talents were the talk of the town.

For the next night or two we chanced not to appear. Meantime the *Observer* and the *Gazette* had started a much hotter quarrel about tithes. When next "Zed" was repeated all went quietly; Miss Torrens and Miss Adams had ceased to attract special remark.

Whether or not Slater, as was hinted, had stirred up the war, to fill the house and advertise the company, it served both effects. At Lynmouth, the next town on our list, we found the house bought out, but no letter from James Romney for me.

I knew now I never should get one. In Miss Alice's place I should have gone into a decline. But I was so strong and so

busy! When you cannot be happy you try to be wise. I must forget James Romney, and not be so silly as to care for any one again. Wasn't I getting on? Hadn't I three guineas a week? Too little by half for my increasing expenses; but if I objected to my salary I should only lose the parts, and not get the money. My position was rising. Annie's jealousy I might take as a compliment. Miss Hope was partial to me, though too politic to show it. Finally Davenant all of a sudden began transferring to me the attentions he was used to bestow upon Miss Torrens!

But Evergreen Edwin's devotion, as Slater facetiously hinted, was merely a matter of form. As the leading actor, it behoved him to be in love with the leading young actress. And some Lynmouth critic, an old flame of Annie's, believing Davenant his rival in her graces, had so fiercely attacked his Lionel Lilford, that the actor in future preferred to pay open court to me, as still obscure, and with no critics on the list of my admirers, which, indeed, was a horrid blank.

I grew sceptical. I lost trust in a great many things. One staunch friend I had in our manager, Slater, who managed us all so adroitly, including Miss Hope, the lion of our menagerie. He watched me on and off the stage very narrowly, and I thought, without conceit, I read approval in his face. My ambition was fired; for my future, my chances all, he held in the hollow of his hand. He gave me valuable hints, was kindly and encouraging, and as the 1st of March, the date on which my engagement and our tour expired, drew nigh, I confidently hoped to be re-engaged shortly, in however small a capacity, and felt grateful to him in advance.

The last fortnight of February found us at Broadgate-by-the-Sea. One afternoon, as Annie, Davenant, and I were strolling on the beach, the talk turned on the imminent dispersion of our company. Miss Hope was specially engaged for a fortnight in Edinburgh, Davenant wanted to take a holiday, Annie had an offer to support Mr. Graves on a starring trip to Ireland. I only had no plans, no prospects. If Mr. Slater dropped me, to whom should I turn?

Just then Beattie Graves came striding along to join us, with an air of such solemn importance that we all hailed him with a "Well, what is the news?"

"Gifford is here," he began. "Come over from some of his grand friends, the Moonstones, of Moonstone Court, some six miles off, where he is staying."

"You might have said it was bad news," observed Annie tartly.

"All news is bad news," said Graves sententiously. "But I've not told you mine yet. Slater sent for him. It's a sudden plan for bringing out 'Zed' in New York. They are disagreed about details, and knocking their heads together to try which is the hardest. Two to one on the manager."

We walked home discussing the *pros* and *cons* of such a trip, especially the *cons*—to save our dignities, supposing we didn't get the refusal—much as a girl runs down the man who might, but she fears won't propose. Davenant dreaded the climate; Annie the crossing; Graves thought he would do better to close with Dublin. Loudest in disparagement was I, whose chance was the poorest. I declared, truly, I had no wish to go to America; less truly, that I didn't think anything would induce me. Five guineas a week and a benefit would have induced me quick enough. And when, after the performance that night, Miss Hope sent me a special message, summoning me to her dressing-room, I was all expectation, and sorely disappointed to find the matter was not one of business.

Dene Abbey, two miles from Broadgate, was the residence of Her Grace the Dowager Duchess of Southwold. Her son-in-law and daughter were there with her, and Miss Hope had been asked by the former if she would organize a theatrical performance at the Abbey in aid of the sufferers from a recent flood. She had seen Mr. Pemberton, and thrown herself into the scheme with characteristic vivacity. She relied upon me, she said, to assist her throughout the affair, which would cost no little trouble. I promised everything, crestfallen and indifferent. What were the Duchess, Mr. Pemberton, Lady Mabel, and their charities to me? It was much more to the purpose that Mr. Slater should engage me to go to America as singing chambermaid. But on the morrow it transpired that all, save myself, had received and accepted the proposal to cross the Atlantic. My services could, and clearly would, be dispensed with.

I played ill that night, feeling all forlorn and utterly cast down. The others were so busy, so airily careless, so full of the theatricals next week at the Duchess's! I had been worried by the free and easy attentions of two of the gilded youth of Broadgate. Who knew but that one might be a local critic, who, if I was rude, might write a cross notice of the play; the other some leader of fashion, with power to fill or empty the stalls and boxes?—empty enough they had been all the week!

Oh, I was feeling savage when the next morning I woke in the dingy little lodging I shared with a young girl who played the old women, and knew that to-day my engagement was out. I spent the morning copying some business papers for Miss Hope. At two I walked to the theatre to deliver them to the manager. I found him alone in the green-room.

"Miss Hope sends you these, Mr. Slater," said I, laying the packet on the table. He made no sign. Why disturb himself to be civil to a no-account girl like me? With a sigh I turned to go. My hand was on the door when he spoke.

"Stay, Miss Adams," he said, and I stayed to hear my doom.

"Of course, you understand," he continued, "that my plans

have been altered by this American scheme. Our provincial tour, which I might perhaps have extended till the autumn, when 'Zed' is to be produced in London, ends here finally—your engagement expires this week." He paused, then added, "Have you anything to say?"

"I wish to thank you for your kindness," I said, more bravely than I felt, "and to ask if you'd give me a line or a word of recommendation that may help me to find another engagement."

"No easy matter for you, Miss Adams, I'm afraid. What could I say for you that would help you much? Only a few months' experience, and a hundred better applicants for the same post perhaps."

It was too bad to flaunt my helplessness in my face, as though I didn't know it already. But I saw, as I had never seen, how slender were my resources. And I had had a taste of prosperity which made the cup of penury more bitter than before.

"What you want," he resumed, "is practice—engagements. But how to get them, my dear? You've no money to pay for them. There are hundreds clamouring to do the work, with friends to back them, and help to keep them before the public; girls with more push than you, more experience, I won't say prettier, still there *are* pretty faces enough. It's a thousand chances to one against you."

I quite agreed with him; and if I held my tongue, it was because I knew if I spoke I should cry. A half-sob did escape; I hoped he hadn't heard it, but he had.

"Don't cry," he said. "Be a good girl, and we'll see what we can do for you."

Now, "being a good girl," I had discovered, is such an enigmatical expression, that his promise did not cheer me particularly. I had been too short with some critic, offended some Lovelace of Broadgate, I supposed. Oh dear, and oh dear!

"Should you like to go to America with us, Miss Adams?" he inquired, in a bantering tone that made me rather wild. Cruel, to jest at my predicament.

"The question isn't whether I should like it," I began, and stopped there.

"But whether I'll take you?" he rejoined quizzingly. "Right. Well, I will—that is, if you'll come on my terms."

The peculiar significance of his manner mystified me outright. The offer did not sound real. He was making game of me somehow.

"I fear you're not in earnest," I said doubtfully. "The company won't require me."

"Quite right, I sha'n't want two Mays over there. But you must admit that you stumbled into the lead rather."

"Yes, I daresay I am not capable of sustaining it, and how

could I manage in New York, where everything is so dear, on my present salary?"

"Yet you wouldn't like to drop into a super again? Once a super, always a super, they say. Well, I don't intend that you shall."

Excellent, generous man! He meant to re-engage me at an increased salary. My heart warmed gratefully towards my benefactor. Gush was not in his line; still some acknowledgment was due, and he looked as if he expected it.

"It is very friendly of you, Mr. Slater," I said sincerely. "If by attention and obedience I can repay you, be sure I shall do my best."

"There, there, don't you be afraid," he said half careless, half coaxing. He stopped, pushed back his chair, drew it nearer, then fixing his eyes on my own, said with a mysterious air:

"How if I were to raise you over all their heads—eh?"

"You're satirical," I replied perplexed.

"No, honour bright. Over all their heads, I say again."

"Miss Hope and all?" I said, trying to laugh.

"Miss Hope and all," he repeated with emphasis.

"Well, I don't know who could do that," I replied, feeling I must be stupid, but unable for the life of me to see the joke.

"I could, if I made you my wife," he said bluntly.

I looked up dumfounded. He met me with a look past all misunderstanding. I shrank, I blushed. A heroine of romance would have darted from the room, banged the door, fled home, locked herself in the solitude of her chamber, and buried her face in the cushions to hide the shame she felt. For Shirley Slater was more than twice my years; his person was commonplace, his temper sharp, and his character generally seemed to me so insignificant that I used to wonder how he had made his way as well as he had. Alas! my uppermost feeling was gratified vanity, at so utterly unexpected a conquest.

My silence, the effect of bewilderment, he took for encouragement.

"You won't expect sentiment from a man of my age, Miss Adams," he went on. "I've knocked about the world till sentiment's been banged out of me. But, or I'm much mistaken, you're vastly too sensible a girl to set store by twaddle. From the first I never lost sight of you and, with training, I think you'll do. But, bless you! you don't understand these things. I do. Now, don't you think you can safely trust your future to my hands?"

I was still too confounded to answer. The decisive moments of your life always take you by surprise. Here was I, a friendless, penniless orphan of nineteen, on the stage, exposed to slights and compromising attentions alike very hard to parry, and ready to worship protection in any lawful shape. On the other hand, he,

the prosperous professional man, to whom she owed her first start, who had helped her through more than one difficulty, and who now in an honest and straightforward manner offered her his hand, and not only security against affronts and fear of want, but a fair and tempting field for her dramatic talents in the future.

Of course I didn't love Mr. Slater, or even like him very much. But why shouldn't I come to like him? Though I had puzzled once or twice over some passing disparaging allusion dropped by members of the company, I knew nothing against him. If I married him I should be his true and faithful wife, and shut my eyes to such failings as I could not amend. Yet if he expected me to jump at his proposal he was mistaken. I remained silent.

"Well," he said, with slight impatience, only half pleased. He had expected it.

"I'm so taken by surprise, so disconcerted," I stammered. Another puzzle started up. How word my refusal, if I refused?

"You'll get over that," he said. "My little girl has only to do as I tell her. This is how we'll manage it. We'll just get married up in town on the quiet—for there are one or two who'd be mad if they knew who I was going to make Mrs. Slater, and might as likely throw vitriol at you as not. Once sailed, let all the world know who you are—the queen of the company. When we come back I open the Albatross and you shall have the juvenile lead. There, my little girl, will that suit you?"

I saw my star rise and shine. Once more I stood outside the Albatross. This time it was my name I saw placarded up and down the street. I heard the plaudits that greeted my entry nightly. I stood mute.

"Silence means consent," he said, rising with an air of conviction that rudely brought me down from the clouds. "Now it only remains to seal the contract. . . ."

He had been arguing, and I looking at everything from a purely theoretical, theatrical point of view. He wasn't demonstrative mostly, and I had almost made up my mind to accept the manager, but not the man, against whom my self now rose in sudden open revolt. Instinctively I shrank from his approach. "Shy!" he said derisively, with a laugh that horrified me, with the certainty it carried that no mere words of mine would dispossess him of the idea I was only making a scene. I was dizzy with dismay. Then at that moment one of the stage carpenters put in his head, with a certain mischievous satisfaction and a message that Mr. Slater was wanted immediately. He responded with an oath that startled me, but the business instinct was so strong in him that in the quick perusal of the papers handed in I was forgotten for an instant, and took advantage of it to escape.

No sooner was I safe and alone in the back street lodging than the affair began to assume a very different complexion. Sitting in the dusky, musty little parlour, adorned with clumsy china vases

with paper roses inside, the gasfittings swathed in pink muslin, I tried to think. Sentiment apart, what sufficient reason had I for refusing Shirley Slater? He had personally shown me kindness, and his readiness to unite himself with one in my lowly position was so disinterested that I felt I was a brute not to be touched by it. He was clever in his line, prosperous, influential, and this proved he had heart as well. He had interested himself in my future and welfare, and now wanted to identify them with his own. Gratitude would insure a friendliness that would suffice for domestic content. His name would shield me from the affronts of public enemies or private admirers.

In declining him, good-bye to all dreams of success—of hopeful employment or agreeable existence. From him I should get no more help. I should drop into a super—probably be edged out of the profession by the more pushing—disqualified for more serious callings by having passed a year on the boards. I saw myself driven from pillar to post, toiling early and late for an uncertain subsistence; health breaking down under the strain, good looks clean gone. A lively imagination like mine is a curse. It spares you nothing. I saw myself discharged from the hospital before I was well, reduced bit by bit to the last straits of slopwork, making matches at twopence a gross, waistcoats at threepence a dozen; until some night, unable to make head against the beggary and starvation staring me in the face, I should go down to the embankment, and taking off my bonnet and shawl, and folding them neatly aside, plunge into the black flood, to be fished out by the waterman for the sake of the reward, resolutely refusing to go into the workhouse—choosing rather to be found dead on a doorstep from inanition at last!

Young beauty, who married the rich old lord, for the sake of getting a first place in society at nineteen; clever woman of your family who accepted the dullard you disliked and despised—for fear you should die an old maid, say—had not I inducements far stronger than those for accepting Shirley Slater? Are you so very unhappy, I wonder? Can you not laugh in your sleeve at romantic folk who cry shame on you? You, my lady, have your title and your diamonds; you, madam, your brevet-rank in society. Feel for Elizabeth Adams, the waif, the least member of a theatrical troupe, with only herself to look to for support, allured by dreams of dramatic success—when a man, whose name is a watchword in the profession where she would like to shine, does her the honour—not to make love to her, there's nothing in that more than common—but to offer her his hand straightforward, his name and a share in the management! It was Fortune brushing past me, as she never would twice. "Grasp your opportunity boldly," said a voice. No need to seek an interview, to court the personal attentions I dreaded. Hadn't he said himself, sentiment was to be left out? Practical, sensible people, we should learn to under-

I stand each other. All I need do now was take a sheet of paper and write a few words he would understand.

I took one. I snatched a pen, it wouldn't write; a second, it blotted the page; a third, I wrote, then rose and flung down the pen. Just then the door burst open and Miss Hope entered tumultuously.

"Liz, I want you to copy these Abbey programmes for me. Printers waiting—they can't read my hand! Why, what's the matter with the girl?" she exclaimed suddenly in a changed tone. I stood before her, hearing without understanding, my eyes starting out of my head, my hair awry, cheeks white. I had frightened myself to death, in fact, by my dreadful dream of the future just now. "Liz, are you ill? Are you mad? Have you killed somebody? Good gracious! child, what is it? Can't you speak?"

The words stuck in my throat, but I strove for a dignified and becoming self-possession.

"I'm just a very little put out," I managed to articulate, in a voice so at variance with my words that Miss Hope laughed aloud.

"Just a little! So I think. Only look like that in the last scene of 'Zed,' and your fortune's made."

"I've been having a serious talk with—the manager," I said.

"Well?" Her tone sharpened; her brows contracted; before her searching, sombre, and suspicious gaze my conscience quailed and I hesitated. "Tell me about it." Her peremptory attack felled you like a sledge-hammer. As my mind was made up she might know all.

"What do you think?" I began with affected nonchalance, sillily. "Mr. Slater, the manager, you know, has asked me to marry him."

"Lord, how she says it!" cried Charlotte. "As if offers of marriage from prosperous managers came in to her every day! How little it takes to turn a silly girl's head. Marry you? So that's his game!"

"Game? it's serious earnest," said I, drawing myself up.

"Aye, that I'll warrant you," she said grimly; then coolly and judicially, "Well, child, and what did we say?"

"We were interrupted, and I came away," I replied with guilty evasion.

"But we've been writing, I see. Your answer?" Quite coolly she snatched it up and read out:

"I accept your terms.—Elizabeth Adams."

She stared at me and broke into a laugh as she put down the paper.

"A pretty business-like epistle, upon my soul!"

"Sentimental epistles and romantic attachments are for books

and plays," I returned. " You know it as well as I do, Miss Hope. A poor girl with her own way to fight can't trample the honourable offer of an honest man's protection under her feet as if it was dust. She might sit out her life waiting for the ideal of her dreams—if she has dreams. She'll never meet him, and if she did, the chances are he'd have nothing to say to her to which she ought to listen."

" Very fair and very fine," she pursued with unabated irony. " So you are marrying for protection? Just a degree better than protection without marriage, eh?"

" I've to work, Miss Hope," I persisted. " I've to act—I don't know if I've talent, but I fancy I've as much as some who get on. But that's hard, as you know, without friends to support you. Now I don't love Mr. Slater—I don't pretend to, and he won't expect it; but I'm grateful and under obligations to him. I don't suppose he's perfection—he's quick-tempered, I know. But even if I don't love him in the story-book sense, if I marry him I shall never love any one else."

" Little fool!" put in Miss Hope, short and sharp, like a pistol-shot.

" Trust my pride for that," I continued. " I respect myself. He will never have reason to repent his—condescension—his choice of a wife."

Miss Hope's countenance kept changing rapidly, its workings denoting a considerable inward stir—something deeper than mere interest in my concerns could have roused. She scanned me from head to foot with a pitying scorn, doubtfully, then said in the rather dramatic way she had when excited:

" If I thought you knew what you were doing, if I thought the dust hadn't got into your silly blue eyes, I'd just shake hands and say, ' Well done, my little schemer! You've baited your hook cleverly and caught your fish. Good luck to you both.' But you, silly innocent, hiding your head in the grass, then hopping into the bird-lime within sight of the birdcatcher—" She stopped short, then demanded, " How do you know Mr. Slater is an honest man, and means honestly by you?"

" Miss Hope," I pleaded, " I may be silly, but not so silly as that. From the first he has always treated me with respect."

" That a man hasn't insulted you seems to me a poor reason for accepting him as a husband," she retorted with contempt. " Won't do, Liz. There's more behind. You're thinking it's your chance to rise in the world, and that you may never get such another. Don't deny it. I see it in your face."

" I don't deny it," said I fretfully. " But whatever I promise I shall perform, you may depend."

" Bah!" she exclaimed with derision. " As if vowing to jump overboard and not drown made the thing easier. Swear to love and honour a man you're bound to despise and detest in six

months, unless he drags you down first to his own wretched level. It ought to take longer than that."

Her voice, the energy of her manner, struck on you like the strange, not loud, beating of the waves of a lake before a storm. It was dusk in the dusty-windowed, shabby parlour, and the figure of this singular, strong-natured woman seemed to grow taller, the space to be filled by her vehemence and her scorn.

"Poverty is a hard master," said I despondingly, "and most choices we have to make are between two evils, the greater and the less."

"I don't know what'll happen to you if you don't marry that man," she instantly replied; "but I can tell you what awaits you if you do. Misery first; infamy afterwards. And why? Just because you're a right-hearted girl to begin with, and can't walk with him in the crooked ways of life. But you must walk there, you know. Remember:

"'Lilies that foster smell far worse than weeds.'

"Don't be absurd," I said peevishly.

"You think you'll keep out of it—you can't. It's a net that trips and catches you—a poison that eats into your soul—when you find every feeling in you of any worth urging you on to disregard the bond called sacred. If he's dealt fairly with you so far, be sure he had good reasons—selfish, not sentimental. Didn't I suspect it more than once? He won't ruin you, my dear; he may leave you to ruin yourself—when he's made his fortune out of your face."

"Do you take him for a fiend?" I asked incredulously.

"No—he's just a vulgar-natured, mean-hearted, selfish, narrow-minded man, who has herded with those of his own kind till his notions of honesty have become queer. If he were honourable, if he were honest, he wouldn't be where he is now. Why, it's notorious. Nobody respects him; but he's successful, and he's feared. I could tell you a thing or two that would make you stare. But there's no plot. You're just a rare pretty girl, my dear, and there's the whole secret. I know you're something besides; that your head is a good one and your heart even better. But these count for nothing—in his estimate. Say he loves you now, in his coarse sort of way—oh, you needn't shrink; that's not what I mean should frighten you—not all." She paused, then resumed :

"Now, let us look on a little. It's no longer 'a Miss Adams—plays small parts in provinces'; it's Slater the manager's beautiful wife. For you *are* beautiful, my dear—not the piquante, pussy-cat prettiness that disappears with the fringe off and dies at five-and-twenty—but the genuine thing, in the grain. You'll be far handsomer some years hence than you are now, and at thirty in your prime. But don't fool yourself into thinking

that'll give you the slightest influence over Shirley Slater when you've been married six months. The manager's beautiful wife! My lords and gentlemen, come to the theatre, see and be dazzled. He gives you first parts. You're thinking of your acting. They're thinking of the shape of your neck and the dimple on your cheek. So it goes on night after night. You're adored at a distance. He's a perfect dragon, your husband, takes care not to cheapen his wares. It's the outside if he allows you to accept a bouquet from a lord or a bracelet from a millionaire. So on for as long as it pays—a year, perhaps, or more. Time comes when money runs short. Your dresses and jewels must be kept up—your prestige. You're surprised when his surveillance relaxes in proportion as real call for it arises. You are off on a track of which I dare you to tell me where it will lead you at last. Is it only on the stage such things happen? *Facilis descensus Averni*, my girl; which means that ignominy is a step in life you can't retrace. You have lowered your flag of pride before you knew it; and the truth you have now to digest is that he only desires to stand aloof and let you fill the house and his purse by such means as may be. Should you want 'protection' you must seek it elsewhere; he cares nothing for you except as an aid in his professional speculations. Your contempt for him by that time will be so bitter that of all worsts the worst seems to be that you should appear to play into his hands, by continuing to share his existence. Then there comes some one—no hero, and anything but a saint; still, a Hyperion to the satyr by your side—and opens a door of escape from a degrading position. Which side is ruin, pray? Where lies duty, where virtue? That's the bog you have floundered into—past escape now. One day your husband tires of it, and goes to law to free himself—and with right on his side."

"Never!" I exclaimed in a tone of adamantine virtue, perfectly sincere.

She answered quietly, in accents of the profoundest pity, "My dear, by that time you'll be in the wrong, as certainly as I stand here. Your only chance is now. Stop. You don't know what you're talking about. I do."

"No woman's life is a path of roses," I said, more stoutly than I felt. "Mr. Slater is not the man to forgive a slight. Left alone, what shall I do?"

"Do? Chicken-hearted girl! Aren't you young, with health and brains in plenty? Don't be a coward and marry a brute, for fear you should go farther and fare worse. You can't. But after all, I talk and talk—yet was I wise for myself, as I want you to be for yourself?"

She stopped short, then began again calmly, distantly at first:

"I knew a girl who gave herself like that, for protection. She

was twenty. She had been on the stage since she was ten. She had met with nothing but humiliations and rebuffs. She was put to act parts she was as fit for as an elephant to act Ariel, and she acted them very ill. Managers told her she would never be fit for the front. She knew they were wrong; but that made things the harder, as she sank in the ranks till she was thankful for a place in the chorus at a third-rate theatre. The ugliest of them was prettier than she, and looked down on her. A gentleman of independent means who frequented the theatre thought he discerned something in her out of the common. He interested himself in her, and the offer he made her of his love she accepted, persuading herself she was doing right. He couldn't marry her legally—he was separated from his wife—and told her a story about it she readily believed. He brought her out as Mliss, the Indian girl, in a dramatic version of Bret Harte's story, and she took the town by storm. After that she had her fill of success—her admirers by the score. But let that time come, and not a regiment of Life Guards can protect you, unless you have in yourself the only perfect protection—love and respect for your husband. How could I love mine, as I had found him? He was violent—he drank—our wretched life degraded us in our own eyes and other people's. By that step I had quickly won eminence as an artist, and forfeited happiness for ever as a woman. You recover your freedom, but never its worth. Your love is a degraded thing, and him upon whom you would bestow it despises it though he courts it. You can never count as his moral equal, never hope seriously to attach him or bring good to his life. Memory, love itself, is a torment—and you could drink or gamble, if nothing else will help you to forget."

She ended with a deep sadness, almost solemn. Then with a quick gesture, as if casting off a weight, she said drily:

"There, now, I've done for you what I never did yet for man or woman—shown you the inside of my heart. Are you worth it, I wonder?"

She was not crying. Could she cry? But the passionate sorrow in her eyes and regret in her tone were worse than weeping. It was I whose tears were falling.

"You're right," I sobbed. "I was wicked to dream of it. I'm as bad as the worst girl that ever sold herself for fine clothes or a title. But I'll not do it, Miss Hope. I won't marry Mr. Slater. Look here, this is what I'll write."

She stood glancing over my shoulder, as I indited:

"*I refuse your terms.*—Elizabeth Adams."

I got up and turned to her. She was laughing now.

"Gently," she said. "It's no joke for you to affront Shirley Slater. I don't see how you're to say no without affronting him; but no hurry."

"What can I write? I'll not hold out false hopes. That would be mean."

"Don't write at all. Never do. And lest he should misconstrue your silence, *I'll* write. The best will be to keep you out of his way for the next day or two. Luckily I know how. There's the Abbey theatricals. I'm going to drive over there this moment with Mr. Pemberton; I'll take you along, and have you left there in safe custody under some excuse till we've settled what to do with you." And she wrote off:

"I require Miss Adams' help for the Abbey performances on the 2nd and 3rd," &c., &c. "She desires me to let you know."

"Mr. Pemberton's servant shall take it at once," she said as she folded the note; then looking up at me with a half-comic, half-wistful expression she said :

"Why did you come into the profession, my girl? It's not for those of your make. Need to be harder than that."

"Don't tell me, Miss Hope, there are not good people in plenty on the stage."

"Quite as many, Miss Adams, I am persuaded, as anywhere else," she drily replied. "But say what you like, the life's a cruel puzzle to those of us who think and who feel. Now on with your bonnet, sharp! There's that poor patient Mr. Pemberton waiting for me in his phaeton outside."

I may forget many things, many eventful moments of my life, but never that back parlour at Broadgate. If I shut my eyes now I see it—the faded carpet, the artificial roses, the glass-bangled candlesticks, and in the midst of the squalor Charlotte Hope—with her eloquent face, flashing eyes, and imperious gestures—like a prophetess in fury; if I listen, I seem to hear her tale ringing in my ears.

(*To be continued.*)



The monthe of Aprile .—

Drawn by the late RANDOLPH CALDECOTT.

CHILDHOOD'S MEMORIES;

OR, ONE TOO MANY FOR HIM.

By J. S. WINTER, AUTHOR OF "BOOTLES' BABY," "CAVALRY LIFE,"
"ON MARCH," &c.

"I DON'T think," said Marcus Orford one day to Lester Brookes and Wolfe Austin, "that there is such a dull, dead-alive hole as Ponticherster on the face of the earth."

"Better than Suakim, any way," answered Brookes.

"I don't know—I really don't know. At Suakim one had something now and then to relieve the dead level and monotony of parade and mess, mess and watering-order, watering-order and field-day, which prevails here. Hang it all, there was the constant scare about cholera, to say nothing of enteric fever—and now and then there was the chance of a brush with a few of those miserable black jokers which we called 'the enemy,' in and out of the miserable scrub and stones which they call 'the Soudan.' And then one always had the *hope* of a real, proper go in and smash up of the whole lot of them; and besides, there was always shooting on hand and that blessed old railway to jeer at."

"Seems to me that the blessed old railway did most of the jeering," observed Austin, with a laugh, "especially the Pears' soap business."

"Yes, by Jove, and most of the swagger too. Why, there was one little chap like a shrimp—sort of director-general of everything in particular—who gave one the impression that if he was just let to go his own way, and take his own precautions and make his own arrangements, the whole line would be made to Berber itself, without a hitch or a drawback, while our people were thinking about beginning it."

"Pon my honour," he continued reflectively, "I never heard the little chap enlarging on the situation without my memory turning instinctively to the days when I was going about with a nurse."

"Why?" asked Orford.

"Why? Cock Robin, you know. I never saw Cock Robin personified before.

"Who killed Cock Robin?
'I,' said the sparrow,
'With my bow and arrow,
I killed Cock Robin.'

"You've got rather mixed, my friend," was Orford's laughing comment. "Cock Robin was killed—'twas the sparrow you meant to liken the director-general to."

"Ah, yes, yes. Any way, he always used to make me think of the ballad," returned Austin coolly; "and whichever it was, he wasn't worth staying in Suakim for—as a study of human nature, you know. I admit Pontichester is dull; but you can get to town in a couple of hours, and you can get your newspaper."

"Ye—es! Who wants newspapers, though? Jam full of a lot of stale rubbish as to who has been spouting, and how many trees the G.O.M. cut down yesterday. Oh!" stretching his long legs out in front of him, and throwing his arms above his head with a terrific yawn, "if something doesn't happen to break this awful monotony soon, I shall be doing something desperate. And yet—what can one do? Hang it, the old regiment isn't the same since Urquhart went and got himself made a blooming swell of a colonel. 'Pon my word, I never thought I should think so little of Urquhart as I've done since he was made chief."

"Can't see any difference in him," put in Lester Brookes.

Orford looked aside with an air of pity for the others ignorance.

"Oh, *you* were only born yesterday," he said coolly. "You didn't know Urquhart in his palmy days; he's been doing the heavy-father style of business ever since you joined. But he was a good fellow once," with a sigh of regret for the bygone days—days of fearful and wonderful practical jokes, in which Urquhart's fertile brain, Urquhart's grim humour, and Urquhart's imperturbable manner, combined with Orford's dare-devil, headlong recklessness, had kept the regiment not only alive but in a state of unrest, most of anything resembling an earthquake or a tornado."

"Do you remember, Austin—or was it before your day—when Urquhart and Archie and I groomed the colonel's charger with cayenne pepper? By Jove, how the Chief did sneeze! and every now and then, when the pepper happened to get to the skin and touched the old gee-up a bit, he gave a great shake as if he'd been the most blood-and-thunder war-horse in creation, and—pouf! Up went the clouds of pepper into the Chief's disgusted face. Yes, and 'my friend, the Duke,' was down too and sitting like an image or a fate at the Chief's side; and presently the pepper began to spread and the Duke's gee got a taste of it; and then the Duke began to sneeze pretty nearly as bad as the Colonel, and his charger, being the youngest and considerably the freshest of the two, took it very much worse than the Colonel's and began to spin round and round like a teetotum. Lord! I never saw a better joke in my life!—the horse spinning frantically round and the Duke sneezing and spluttering—the Colonel so bad he couldn't attend even to the Duke—and every shake of his gee

making it worse and worse. Lord! it was a joke, that!—and the cream of it came afterwards. When we had got rid of the personage, he asked Urquhart what the devil could be the matter with the two brutes? And Urquhart looked at him in his wooden, solemn way, and said he was sure he didn't know; he had heard there were several cases of glanders in the town. *Glanders!* And now Urquhart does the heavy-father style, and hasn't a ghost of a joke left in him. I'll tell you what it is; it's a pitiable sight to see a once right-good fellow in command of a regiment; it's so demoralizing."

He rose up from his chair as he spoke, stretched himself, settled the hang of his sword, regarded the reflection of his face in the pier-glass with a melancholy air, put his forage cap at the proper angle, and went with the clatter and jingle which usually distinguished all Marcus Orford's movements out into the square.

Lester Brookes looked after him in surprise.

"I never heard him grumble like that before," he said at length.

Austin laughed.

"Oh, we may look out for squalls now," he answered. "When Orford begins to find out that a place is simply too slow to live in, he generally sets his wits to work to do something or other to liven it. One of us will suffer before the week is out."

And then he went off into a recital of all Marcus Orford's most brilliant jokes, ending :

"He's been extra quiet of late, so he'll have that as well as the dulness of Ponticherster to make up for."

Meantime Marcus Orford was crossing the barrack-square at a swinging pace, his vexed eyes surveying the different buildings in sight with disgust and weariness, his vexed soul going back pertinaciously to the little man at Suakim, who had been wont to recall Wolfe Austin's childish memories in the shape of the little nursery rhyme :

" 'Who killed Cock Robin?'"

"There was a nursery-tale," he said to himself as he reached the stable where his horses had their abode, "about a bath-room and some tar. Now, what the devil was that? For the life of me, I can't remember."

There was not a soul in the stable and he went in musing still, punched his horses with a good deal of "Whoa, my man," and "So, so, old lady," then stood still in the stall where his favourite was, and regarded that animal with a stare of puzzled reflection. "What the devil was it?" he repeated impatiently.

But although the beautiful satin-coated person, who rejoiced in the name of Cigarette, and was known in the regiment as the cleverest thing that ever went on four legs, rubbed her velvet nose

against his cheek and looked softly at him out of her languishing eyes, this particular memory of his childhood did not return to him very readily. You see a good deal had happened to him since nursery rhymes and fairy-tales had been the fashion with him. Nor did it return to him much more easily when he had bade adieu to Cigarette and was swinging across the square again, this time in the direction of his quarters.

But it came back in the course of the afternoon, bit by bit, "line upon line," as the little goody book has it, and gradually the whole scheme of a new and brilliant practical joke was built up within the odd store-room which Marcus Orford called his mind.

He never told a soul what his intentions were, but when the idea of a confidant presented itself to him, quoted with a grin a part of the rhyme which had helped to suggest the new *divertissement* to him :

"'I,' said the sparrow, 'with my bow and arrow,
I shot Cock Robin.'"

So he decided that, although in a general way one of the most sociable men in the regiment, he would shoot this particular Cock Robin without any assistance whatever.

He selected Lester Brookes as the best subject for his operations, partly because that young gentleman, not having been very long in the regiment and having joined very shortly before the Soudan campaign, when Marcus Orford had other things to occupy him than to elaborate practical jokes, had never been honoured by his distinguished consideration in that respect, and it was also partly because Brookes' room was immediately above his own, always an advantage, as doubtless my reader is well aware.

The story which he had recalled with so much difficulty was one in which figured the usual lovely and ill-used princess of spotless soul and all other angelic attributes and a wicked queen step-mother, who by the assistance of the black arts had changed the eleven or twelve brothers of the lovely princess into as many wild swans or geese. There was a long and touching history of how the lovely damsel took a vow of silence while she made eleven shirts out of churchyard flax, thereby laying herself open to the pleasant charge of being a vampire or a ghoul, who lived on dead men's flesh, and, greedy thing that she was, sat up at night to eat it, and finally having succeeded in the restoration to human guise of her many brothers, the story winds up with a pleasant but rather grim description of the death of the step-mother queen ; how when, attended by all her ladies, she entered her bath-room, she found awaiting her a pit dug beneath the carpet at the doorway—a pit filled with boiling pitch—into which she fell and thus made an end of herself upon earth and her machinations for ever. And this, in a modified form, was the joke (save the mark) which Marcus Orford proposed to prepare for the delectation of his

brother officer, Lester Brookes. It would take days to accomplish. In the first place he had chosen to work single-handed, so that he could have no assistance; in the second, it was a scheme which would require the most delicate care that it might remain an absolute and profound secret.

Of course he was aware from the first that pitch would be an impossible agent for him to employ. For one thing its use would carry the joke beyond even the limits of a barrack joke, and for another, the smell would betray him before the time was ripe for the *dénouement*.

Well, when he came to go seriously into the matter he found that any idea of preparing a literal pitfall for Lester Brookes was quite out of the question, there not being more than the depth of a foot or thirteen inches between the boards and the ceiling of the room below it. This plan therefore he was compelled to abandon, but after much care and deliberation he thought out another which promised to work *even better* when it came to be put into execution. This was to poise an immense tub or rather a zinc pan, immediately over the door, so arranged by means of cords, pulleys, springs, and other appliances that when the unlucky occupant of the room should enter after the trap was set for his reception he should receive the entire contents over his person. Of course there was no question of the joke being either original or particularly brilliant; only to the rather stale original he conceived the idea of adding a plan by which about a hundred Seidlitz powders should come in contact with the water in its descent and go off about Brookes's ears with a fizzing and a spluttering calculated, Orford thought, to scare him pretty nearly out of his seven senses.

In order to get the full effect of the joke and to have it in the most perfect working order, Marcus Orford went in for private rehearsals in his stable, to the astonishment and delight of his groom, who whispered in his chum's ear that Mr. Orford had got some rare joke on, he'd be bound, and who laughed immoderately when he saw the Colonel's mastiff, Zug, come tearing out of the stable, howling and yelling, with his tail between his legs and all his handsome tawny coat seething and boiling like a volcanic eruption.

But Private Stokes, first groom to the Honourable Marcus Orford, did not find the matter quite so funny when *he* had a practical and personal experience of what his master's rare joke must have felt like to the disgusted and astonished Zug. He went slowly and quite without suspicion into his stable one fine morning, intent only on his own business, which happened to be the doctoring of a slightly-swollen ankle caused by a somewhat too quickly obedient "come over" of one of his master's horses. Thus he came in for the full benefit of that same master's elaborate arrangement of zinc pan, cords, pulleys and springs, of cold water

and Seidlitz powders; and when that master saw the big drenched and half-blinded dragoon stagger out into the open, a seething mass of white foam, d——ing and spluttering as he dashed the water from his eyes and shaking his short crop of curly hair as vigorously as ever the mastiff Zug had done, he just rushed off to the privacy of his own quarters, and locking the door, gave way to the most extravagant transports of delighted joy, for his little plan was safe and all his elaborate care and trouble had been brought to a perfect end.

I do not think that it very often happens in this life that a man has the opportunity of not only eating his cake but also of having it. Yet, for a time, that was a pleasure which fell to Marcus Orford's lot; he had the double pleasure of seeing how his volcano worked (by practical application) and of having still the anticipation of how it would work when put into execution for the final trial: the dog had been good, and the man had been better, but it was from Lester Brookes that Marcus Orford expected to extract the richest cream of enjoyment. He had given the most minute and elaborate care to the private rehearsals in the stable, but all that was as nothing to the jealousy with which he prepared every detail, and examined every point, so that there should not be the smallest hitch in the final working.

Unfortunately, like some of the others, he had mistaken Lester Brookes altogether. The unassuming manner and tone which was that young gentleman's habitual form, had deceived him completely, and he was in utter ignorance of the fact—which was the true state of affairs—that he had to deal with a specimen of a long-headed, hard-thinking class, who if not quite so quick-witted as himself, was considerably the most clever at the game of putting two and two together.

Now, Lester Brookes, bearing in mind the words which Wolfe Austin had let drop in the ante-room a few days before, words assuming a distinct air of prophecy, to the effect that the Black Horse in general might look out for squalls now, came to the conclusion that if the regiment in general might be on the look-out for squalls, he in particular, being comparatively a new-comer and entirely a stranger to Orford's little ways of amusing himself and enlivening dull quarters, might, nay, had best, be on the look-out.

Consequently he went on his quiet way, and kept his eye as closely as possible on all Marcus Orford's movements, with the result that he managed to gather exactly of what his newest scheme of amusement consisted, and had the satisfaction even of being able to share in Marcus Orford's enjoyment of Zug's astonishment and fury, and equally to enjoy the sight of Private Stokes as he staggered, spluttering and vociferating out of his master's stable.

"By Jove," said Lester Brookes within himself, as he went off

into Ponticherster, after having had his laugh out, "it's the cleverest dodge I ever heard of. But I wonder who the devil he means to get the benefit of it? The Colonel, I shouldn't wonder. Urquhart's back-slidings in the joking way seem to have cut Orford to the very heart."

Not for one single moment did this modest and unassuming young man imagine that he was to be the one honoured by all this preparation and elaborate care; and when a few hours later he suddenly grasped the truth, that such was indeed the fact, he honestly thought so little of himself that he considered it neither more nor less than a thousand pities that it should be what he called "wasted" upon him.

"Seems such a pity," said he, as he reached the principal street of the dull little town, "and particularly when I know as much about it as Orford himself. Well, we must see if we can't improve upon that, any way."

Therefore on his way back to barracks, as he happened to run against Colonel Urquhart, who was going in the same direction, he made himself so agreeable to that officer,—who, by-the-bye, was privately of opinion that Brookes was one of the few sensible men the regiment contained,—that they not only walked all the way there together, but parted with a promise from the Chief to come round to Brookes' quarters in half-an-hour's time to see an old engraving which the younger man had picked up in a second-hand shop for a mere trifle a few days previously.

Having parted on this understanding with the Colonel, Brookes betook himself to the ante-room, where he found half-a-dozen of the fellows, among them Marcus Orford, in possession.

Marcus Orford addressed him with a mild urbanity which would have made him smell a rat even had he suspected nothing before; it made several other heads turn in that direction also, and several pairs of eyes met one another with a questioning look, which being interpreted meant: "What devilment is Marcus Orford up to now, I wonder?" and at the same time several minds made themselves up to a resolve that during the next hour or two, where Brookes went they would go, and that whatever might happen to be the devilment which Marcus Orford had in his mind, they would contrive to have their share of the harvest thereof.

And they had it—Marcus Orford, Lester Brookes, and the rest—in a manner they little dreamt of. For presently, when the half-hour had expired, Lester Brookes rose from his chair with an admirably-feigned carelessness.

"Well, I must be off. I bought an old engraving the other day for twopence-halfpenny, so to speak, and the Colonel is coming to my room to see it. I expect he's there by this time."

As Brookes sauntered slowly out of the ante-room, up jumped Orford simultaneously with the others.

"I'm going to my room—got some letters to write," he explained.

It was odd, but the others were all going to their respective quarters with the same intention ; more oddly still, although several of them, Marcus Orford among them, had their quarters in the lower corridor, they all seemed to be seeking them in the upper storey, in which Lester Brookes's were situate.

And as he, followed by the others on tip-toe, gained the upper passage, Colonel Urquhart, accompanied by an old gentleman with white curly hair and a smart velvet coat, came up the stairs at the other end of it and turned into Brookes's room.

"Yes," they heard the Colonel say, "Brookes tells me it's a genuine Bartolozzi after Michael Angelo, and he picked it up for seven-and-sixpence in a little broker's place down the town."

"Are there any more?" broke in the velvet-coated old gentleman eagerly, and then there was a yell, a spluttering, *and* a swearing, the volubility of which astonished even those stalwart and anything but straight-laced dragoons.

"What is it?" asked Orford hurrying up the stairs.

"It's your FATHER," answered Austin.

OXFORD MEMORIES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "TWENT YEARS IN THE CHURCH,"
"AGONY POINT," &c.

"BUT what is the other reason that these men gain such uninterrupted credit?"

"Because they differ very widely from you in their way of asking it. I have seen you go into a shop, and order things without bargaining for the price, or showing any regard for the cash. "When we observe that kind of carelessness," said an Oxford tradesman to me, "it is quite plain the credit is not safe. No gentlemen are more careful about the cost of things than they who have a certain fund from which to draw, and who look forward to a certain time in which they have resolved to cash up." This is a shrewd remark, and one of which I have observed the truth in many instances. The reason is, that these careless customers feel that they are quite at a tradesman's mercy: they are afraid to think of their responsibilities, or to look their creditor in the face."

"But do you think they know my father is poor?

"I think that they have no assurance that he is rich. They have trusted you hitherto on the credit of your name and college. But now, seeing you have quickened your pace a little, that all your bills together must make a larger sum than they can risk without better security than your mere name as a gentleman, and finding you at steeple-chases, and £40 added at one fell swoop for the horse you have killed, depend upon it they have conferred together, and suspecting you may not command money for all, every man is in a hurry to get his bill paid first.

"I can assure you I have authority for what I say. "There are no better paymasters than the collegians," said one of your creditors to me last term, "if a man will only credit with care and discretion. If a gentleman orders no more boots and shoes of me than he may be supposed to wear, and if he pays me a small sum occasionally on account, I will allow a balance increasing from ten to fifteen pounds to stand over till he takes his degree, or even longer, in consideration of continued custom from the country. I cannot employ my capital better; of course I must charge a credit price, but this will not pay for four years' credit; nor can any charges pay for such credit, if it extends to a whole bill, and not to a small balance only."

"I must here stop to explain points connected with the credit system. Four years' credit is twenty per cent. deducted from profits. It is evident that a tradesman who gave such accommodation to all his customers must charge at least twenty-five per cent., that is, one fourth more than the ready-money dealer, to gain a livelihood. This, however, is impracticable. The truth is, Oxford tradesmen do not give four years' credit in the general way of business. I remember on one occasion buying an article of a tailor who was a noted long-credit man. He told me, 'Sir, I never dun.' I was almost induced to make a purchase under this assurance, and feeling that I could pay when quite convenient. The result was this: three or four times in about as many weeks I was pestered for orders by a man who brought round fancy patterns for trousers and waistcoats. I was continually importuned not to pay my old debt, but to contract new. 'Of course,' said one of my friends, 'if you want tick—you must keep the bill going, and feed the duns.' At the end of the year, finding I could give no more orders, this long-credit man sent in his bill, 'presuming I had closed my account.'"

This is not a respectable way of doing business, and I am happy to say it is not a common way. Oxford tradesmen feel and openly complain that they are materially injured by such practices. Almost all tradesmen will say that they will give good credit, and that gentlemen may suit themselves. Many tradesmen in every town will say, on particular occasions, "Take this, sir, and I will stand my chance: pay when you please;" but those who specify four or five years' credit as a bait to every customer, and for every order indifferently, are a class of men with whom collegians should be very cautious in dealing. I know, from experience, they do not mean what they say, but sometimes more and sometimes less. One trick is to let a man contract a long bill, and then, on some special pretence, put it in the hands of an accountant, who claims payment at once. Another object they have in view is to extort, through fear of enforcing immediate payment, numerous orders at exorbitant prices. And when they have carried this system as far as they can, they have another, which will be learnt from the sequel.

As every demand creates a supply, where there are many fools there will necessarily be some knaves. The university officers look out so sharply to detect malpractices, that collegians must expect to find the sharpest practitioners among the non-resident tradesmen who visit Oxford only for orders. The growing prejudice against Oxford tradesmen is greatly owing to the success of a set of swindlers, who are more properly to be considered as bill-brokers and money-lenders than regular tradesmen.

"The same bootmaker who let me so much into the secrets of his practice," continued my friend, "added one observation which bears chiefly on your present case. 'There was Mr. Watfield, of

Oriel, by whom I lost £30. This was my own fault. When I heard that he had killed Seckham's horse in a steeple-chase, I ought to have insisted on having my account settled immediately.'

"Again, Sailor, the pastrycook, observed of Bullen, when his father refused to pay his debts, that he would never have trusted him to such an extent had he not observed that when his father came to see him, they went out hunting together. It was very hard, he complained, a man should say £60 was too large a bill for his son to contract for suppers, breakfasts, and desserts, during many terms, when he countenanced his hunting.

"This, and much more conversation of the same kind, opened my eyes. But the question was, how to meet the bills. Many painfully anxious thoughts passed through my mind when I found that part, at least, of every bill must be paid. How to apply to my father for money I knew not: I was certain he would be wholly unprepared for such a disclosure. Besides, the worst part of my difficulty was, that he had often talked in my presence of the unprincipled extravagance of others, when I little thought that my own case was irretrievable. I had said, yes, yes, no, no, and thus seemed fully to fall in with all his opinions. Had he ever asked me the plain question, 'Do you owe money?' I should have said, 'Yes,' or, at all events, I could have truly said, 'I do owe a little, but I hope to set all right soon.' Still, the general impression he had received was such, that my sisters once told me that my father said he learnt from me that I did not owe a shilling. My answer was, 'I never said so; but let him be happy in his error—I do not owe anything to signify.'

"This being the impression on my father's mind, I felt that he would be above measure concerned, because it had always been his boast that I never had told him a lie. However, the bitter draught could not be put aside; and I wrote to this effect—that I was pressed for money, having had the misfortune to kill a horse, valued at £40—that I had also been so imprudent as to omit keeping accounts, and that, therefore, I had otherwise exceeded my income in books and other articles—that if he would oblige me with £100 I would use the strictest economy for the future.

"At the same time I wrote to my sisters, to remove any unfavourable impression, if my father thought that I had deceived him. And here I will declare that, selfish as I may appear to be, if by any sacrifice I could have saved myself the pain of writing that letter, I would have done it with all my heart.

"The above letter was the truth, but not the whole truth; and almost the truth is often the greatest lie that can be told. At least, it is no less prejudicial to a man's reputation. And so it proved in my case.

"The next post brought a very kind letter from my father, with a cheque for £100. He said that killing the horse was an accident,

and he would answer for it that in this instance a dead horse was worth double as much as a live one. As to the remaining sixty pounds, some of it, he was glad to see, was for books, and he flattered himself I was forming a taste for literature ; and since I had been at college nearly two years, perhaps he should be thankful I had managed my money so well, especially as I was in the first society. He quite entered into the satisfaction I should feel at clearing off all encumbrances, and beginning as it were over again. He also added some hints on the way to keep accounts.

"A letter from my sister informed me there had been a terrible breeze at home, first, about me, and, secondly, between my father and mother, arising out of one of those most provoking of all remarks, 'I told you how it would be, my dear.' They remarked that the money was very inconvenient ; indeed my father had only lately said he could not afford a new pianoforte. However, all had blown over, and his annoyance had turned to compassion towards myself.

"Well, thought I, one thing is plain, my father believes this £100 will pay all ; I must economize : come what will, I can never acknowledge that I owe another penny.

"When I began to make the money go as far as possible to satisfy the most clamorous of my creditors, I found that the owner of the horse could be prevailed upon to wait. So this bill, the main ground of my application to my father remained unpaid. Still the £100 was soon frittered away among a number of claimants, without doing much either to allay their discontent or to reduce their bills.

"This was merely stopping a gap—I should say, one of many gaps—and only a temporary stoppage after all. One and all remarked they should be sorry to put me to inconvenience, and trusted I should continue as good a customer as heretofore. Now, for the first time, I found the consequence of having dealt with more than one tradesman for the same article. When I thought of ordering as few clothes or boots as possible, it would occur to me Shanter will be jealous lest Mather should supply my summer clothes, and Refton will be equally suspicious of Baldwin about my boots : to prevent being dunned I must give occasional orders to all : but what then becomes of my resolution to economize ? As to stable keepers, every man who wants to ride on a fine day must order a horse just where he can find one left in the stable ; so it may easily be supposed that I had some small account with every dealer in Oxford. Their hostlers go the circuit of the colleges regularly every day about breakfast time ; and I cannot now help laughing when I think of the group of ugly customers which they formed one morning when I looked out and found three of them together, with one dog-fancier, and a man who would provide either rats to hunt or pigeons to shoot, were besieging my door at the same time. My friends soon told me that I could not think

of stopping : if I ceased dealing with a tradesman, I must close his account in a business-like manner. This proved too true. Still, of the majority of my tradesmen I have no reason to complain. They came honestly for their money : if they were put off their tack by my talking about orders, this was my fault. Certainly I cannot fairly say that there was any attempt to take advantage of my situation by the majority. Still, whenever I gave an order, I was in no fair position to bargain about price ; so, of course, my bills went on increasing. At last, however, a new kind of mischief arose to complete my ruin.

"Maunder, whose horse I killed, became very short of money. Fifty-three pounds was the amount of his bill, and an immediate discharge he must have. 'Very sorry, sir—but my creditors won't wait no more nor yours.'

"What was to be done ? That my father should be applied to a second time, and on account of the same dead horse which he thought he had paid for, was a thought not to be endured. I had a week to arrange matters, and before the day of payment arrived the following occurrence took place :

"One of the long-credit tradesmen, a money-lender in disguise, who no doubt knew how far I was embarrassed, and might perhaps have heard that I had a small fortune in expectancy, called one morning just as I was going to lecture. I was accordingly about to dismiss him very briefly, when he seemed disposed to stand his ground, put on a placid air, but rather like that of a man who stood on the higher ground of the two, and said something to the effect of 'Wished to settle a little business—some arrangement to propose between you and me, sir. You know, business, sir—something definite.' So saying, he laid down an account of about thirty-five pounds for clothes.

"Some few words escaped me, showing my annoyance and vexation, when he said, 'Be easy, sir ; if you knew the gentlemen I see, and the ease and facility of the arrangements which I suggest, you——'

"The fact is, I said, I have a heavy bill for a horse I staked ; how to meet it I know not.

"Indeed ! sir. A gentleman of your name and respectability—you never need be at a loss. Allow me, sir, to——'

"Name or not—money's wanted now.

"Money ! true. But your name will raise money which will cover my account and the other too."

"Suffice it to say, by the evening of that day I had been in communication with a money-lender—his agent, doubtless—and it was arranged that in three days' time I should receive £110, for which I was to accept a five months' bill for £150. In other words, to borrow £110 I paid £40 as interest in advance ! Of course this was not concluded till I mentioned all particulars of the land to which I was entitled, and the tenant's name.

"But had I no scruple, you will ask, in assenting to terms so exorbitant? Yes, I saw the matter as clearly then as now, but what was my alternative? If my creditors had been alarmed at the loss of the horse, a second difficulty, to the amount of £75, would cause every debt I owed to be placed in a lawyer's hands. I should have been summoned to the Vice-Chancellor's Court by twenty creditors at least. This would reach the tutor's ear, and my father would be informed at once. To apply to him would be to forfeit his confidence for ever. He would believe me the most shameless of liars, though I can truly declare that my conscience did not accuse me of falsehood when I wrote the letter. I felt I need disclose no more bad news than necessary; and in saying less than the truth, and mentioning the bill for books in preference for others, you may say I meant to deceive and did deceive; still the lie was so far diluted and disguised, that it was almost as palatable as truth. Then that unlucky horse! 'If you intended to pay for it why did you not pay for it?' my father would say; and who is there that has not felt that when an explanation of a fault, however true, takes many words, it is better for his credit to let judgment go by default, for he is sure to be suspected of an artful and ingenious lie.

"Thank God! I hate a lie as much as any man; but experience has shown me that the only guardian of truth is innocence. Once part the virtues, and they lose their strength. Break one commandment, and we may well believe we are *guilty of all*; for we are capable of all. There would not be so many lies told if men were better judges of truth in all its forms and fair proportions. As it is, I truly believe that *all men are liars*, for I observe that all men use their words to garnish their actions, and put the best side of their conduct uppermost; though in life there are so many thousand trivial sayings and doings to one which forms so prominent a stumbling-block as this forty-pound dead horse, that many men live and die with a character for truth, though no more their due than mine.

"The last piece of reasoning which entered my head and quieted my scruples before I put my name to the bill was the following:—This extravagance injures no one's peace of mind but my own. I had rather sign away a thousand pounds than distress my father, after his late liberality, for a penny.

"This thought soothed me, as though I were acting from a generous principle. Still the very name of a bill transaction, and signing my name for money, sounded so ominous in my ears, that it made me nervous in the extreme. Giving a note-of-hand was associated in my mind with insolvency and bankruptey. I had even an instinctive dread of being betrayed into forgery; and, to say the truth, when I met the bill-broker I had taken so much wine to keep my spirits up, and had so far lost my self-command from protracted excitement, that had some villainous instrument of any

other kind been prepared, I might have signed it, and been made a forger at once.

"Nor was this my only danger, I have since heard that it is a common practice with money-lenders to obtain a signature to a bill, and immediately sue upon it, filling up the date as they please, while they leave their victim in their office, under a pretence of going to fetch the cash. When inquiry is made, the answer is, that the person is a stranger, and has been gone some time.

"A gentleman of my acquaintance was swindled in this manner of an acknowledgment for £400 many years since by the famous Minter Hart. He was obliged to remain in France till that gentleman-like, most accomplished, and fascinating knave (for such he was described to me) died on his way to Botany Bay.

"As I came away from the coffee-house at which I encountered this sharper, I met his friend the tailor. He saw I was nervous, and tried to laugh my concern away. He pretended that the meeting was accidental, and that he knew but little of the money-lender. As I paid him his account of £35, he remarked, 'It is not that there is anything so extraordinary in this arrangement you have thought of, sir; but if I might advise, I would not mention it, for the college authorities are very particular; you would be expelled to a certainty. Any tradesman would be ruined if he were known to have any such dealing. That man does business in town—his visits to Oxford pay him pretty well, though. Do not mention this to your fellow-collegians: still I could mention one of your friends who has had this kind of accommodation more than once. You know Mr. Vallance—doubtless he has not told you, sir.'"

So far I have related the confessions of this ruined collegian in nearly the very words in which I heard them at different times from himself. The remainder I learned partly from his mother and partly from his solicitor.

A widow in her loneliness is a common character in works of fiction; I trust, however, that so interesting a personage will not prejudice the credibility of a tale of simple, though distressing, facts. Richard Lyall's father did not live to hear his son's headlong career, but died, after a short illness, within a few months of the day on which his son would be of age to take his estate. To this time the father had looked forward, in the full confidence of obtaining his son's consent and signature to a legal instrument, making over part of the estate which was settled on him, as the eldest son, for the benefit of his mother and sisters. Richard, notwithstanding, consented to give up the same portion of his inheritance that his father intended to recommend.

Before Mr. Lyall's death, however, the first bill had become due; many other accounts had also been sent in, adding still farther to his embarrassment. That a bill for £150 should be dishonoured, he had learnt, was a very serious matter at all times, and more

especially in his case ; because, expulsion threatened him on the one hand, and his father's reproaches on the other. The money-lender was, of course, aware of all these holds upon his creditor, and being also quite confident that accommodation—such is the term for a lift on the road to ruin—could not be very readily procured from any other quarter, he took care to be at hand just at the time that the day of payment had arrived.

"Just called to say, sir, that the bill will be due on Thursday—I should not mention it in the common way of business, but college gentlemen are inexperienced, and do not consider that the man who holds a bill does not wait like another creditor."

"The man who holds the bill ! Why, you hold it, don't you ?

"I hold it ! Excuse me, sir ;—gone through twenty hands at least, I should think, since it left mine. A bill with such a name as yours, sir, circulates like Bank of England paper."

"This puzzled me quite," said Lyall, "for I did not understand the nature of this new kind of debt which I had contracted; but at once all the consequences flashed before my mind, and I said :

"Why, then, twenty people at least must know that I have been reduced to the necessity of accepting of this accommodation ?

"Certainly, yes, certainly ; but quite in the way of business : what of that, sir ?"

"And any tutor may—

"No, sir, no. Allow me : we understand business too well for that, sir. Tutors have no such debts as can cause them to be paid by bills ; tutors pay tradesmen, not tradesmen tutors, except that a note may pass back to them in change ; and no man pays a bill as small change, you know, sir."

"So far all seemed satisfactory ; but it was no longer a mystery why the rest of my creditors had become more and more impatient to have their accounts settled ; besides, this money-lender had a direct interest in alarming them, for the purpose of adding to my perplexity.

"Good morning, sir," he said, making a pretence, no doubt only a pretence, to go : 'excuse my troubling you, sir, but young gentlemen are apt not to know that the holder of a bill will sue at once if cash is not forthcoming ; besides, this is in a banker's hands, I suspect, and then there is no alternative. Good morning.'

"Stay—stay ; one moment—

"I have an engagement, sir. Nothing more, sir ; merely that—just in passing."

"Of course I was now resolved on detaining him. Indeed it is really wonderful how eager he made me by this pretended indifference. In a few minutes I had admitted that I was unprepared to meet the bill, and, indeed, that I was in a position rather to increase my debts than to defray them.

"We soon began to talk about further accommodation. He asked me how many months I wanted of being of age. He urged the serious risk he had run from my being a minor; at last, however, he said he would not determine anything at the time, but gave me his address, and persisted in leaving me.

"By the next evening I had a second interview with my tormentor, and in consideration of his arranging to take up this bill for me—it proved to be in his own hands all the while—I had given another bill for £250."

Before the second bill became due, Richard Lyall was called home on account of his father's death: it was then that he completed the settlement to which I have alluded, and found himself possessed, no longer of a mere allowance of £250 a year, but of about £360 a year, from rents of property at his own entire disposal.

It were long to tell, and I know not that I could recollect, the various links in the chain which had thus artfully begun to be thrown around him; but suffice it to say that within three years not one shilling of this estate could he call his own.

But why, it will be asked, did he not immediately inform his solicitor of the extent and nature of his liabilities, and stop the nefarious system at once? I know not; except that when a man feels he is doing a foolish thing, a man of sound sense and the friend of his family is not quite the person to whom he would make it known; besides, young men are very ignorant of business; and when they can state a matter to themselves as a mere question about a hundred pounds more or less, all persons of experience can testify that they too often ruin themselves before they are aware of their danger.

The news that a minor has succeeded to his estate soon spreads, so the money-lender was soon on the way to offer Lyall accommodation on easier terms; because now, as he observed, he had security to give, though the true reason was that he could raise money from other sources. He made very light of the bill which he held, suggested that it should be renewed, and observed that when one of Mr. Lyall's leases fell in, it would be quite time enough to settle.

Relying on the ease and affluence of his circumstances, and finding that he was no longer pressed by any creditors in Oxford, Lyall made repeated visits to town. His great weakness was ambition to be noticed by persons of title. Nothing is more easy than for a young man who is a gentleman by birth, if he has plenty of loose cash, to gain an introduction to what is called high society; though to obtain an honourable footing and terms of respect with the more honourable members of the aristocracy is quite another matter. But out of so large a class there always will be some to whom a good-natured fool or an easy dupe is so useful a character that they cannot afford to be par-

ticular; accordingly Lyall was soon flattered by the signal honour of sitting in Lord —'s box at the opera, after paying for a dinner for him and his friends at Long's Hotel, not to mention lending him money and cutting in at a game of Van John for high stakes.

Mrs. Lyall, however, was not doomed to remain long in the bliss of ignorance. Her own observation soon convinced her of her son's extravagance, because, as she remarked, "I had for too many years been accustomed to see how far the whole of my dear husband's income would go not to see when Richard must be exceeding his part of it." The first corroboration she received originated in a letter from a tenant of the estate, to the effect that some lawyer, whose name he did not know, had written to ask him the name of the party to whom he paid his rent, and what signature his receipts for rent usually bore.

This letter Mrs. Lyall referred to her attorney, and was soon alarmed with an opinion that her son must be raising money on the security of his estate! Judge, therefore, of her state of mind when she also heard that her son was in London, living at Long's, instead of keeping term at Oxford.

"That very morning," said the anxious mother while asking my advice about her son's affairs, "I put myself in the Lincoln mail, and set off for London, without any more luggage than I could carry in my muff. It was a dark night in February, and about nine o'clock, when I drove up in a hackney coach to the door of Long's Hotel. The waiters looked, as much as to say, Who can you be, all so bold? when, as heedless as if I were at my own door, for my heart was too full to notice their fine liveries, or to pay them half the respect they would look for from a widow in weeds, unattended, in a hackney coach, I hastened at once by them into the house, and then turning round to one of them, I said, with a degree of earnestness that must have astonished them, 'I want your master.'

"They stared, I remember, at so unusual a guest, and did not reply for a moment, but stood looking at each other, when I said:

"'I must see him. I am come on no common errand. I must speak with the master of this house directly.' They seemed startled, as well they might be, by my manner, and in a few minutes the master, or perhaps it was the manager, of the hotel came forward.

"'You have a Mr. Lyall staying here, I believe?'

"'We have, ma'am. He is not at home just now.'

"'Then I must find him—I must wait for him till he comes in. You are surprised, I see you are. Look at me, and you must know I can be no one but his mother. Who else but a mother would seek him out in this way? But it is indeed high time I should.'

"One of the waiters then said he could ascertain where he was

gone. The porter had been sent to secure a box for a party who had dined with him, and that, if I pleased, a message could be sent immediately. So I sent the porter with my card.

"Ah! poor Richard. He told his sisters afterwards that when, in the midst of the merriest part of the performance, the box-keeper put into his hand a black-edged card, with 'Mrs Richmond Lyall, 7, Park Row, Lincoln,' he was more startled than he had ever been before in his life. He soon returned; if he had not, I should have gone after him into the theatre. Meanwhile I asked to be shown into my son's room, and soon found myself waiting in his bedroom. There was a fire blazing away, I suppose at about the rate of a shilling an hour, two wax candles were on the dressing table, and so spacious and handsomely furnished was the apartment that, thought I, Pretty doings, Richard, indeed! your poor father and I never slept in such a chamber all the thirty happy years that we lived together.

"Well, when he came he could hardly look at me. What I said to him, poor fellow, I don't know: a great deal, you may be very sure; but I half laugh and half cry now when I think of it.

"The first thing he plainly uttered was, 'Well, mother, you must have some supper; yes, and a glass of champagne too, to cheer you up.' But I could not eat—I was thoroughly exhausted. At last he talked about my coming up, and said it was so foolish—still, he would pay the journey; but when I spoke of going home, he said he could not leave London—he had so many engagements. Engaged, indeed! I said. Would you have told your poor dead father that? Engaged! You are engaged to go to gaol, at this rate. Richard, my child, come you shall. Though weak in body, I am strong in energy. I have not travelled so many miles in my old age for nothing. I will follow you from place to place. I will alarm the whole town by my determination. It is in vain to tell me of engagements. Well, he soon came to: he saw I was resolved, and felt I had a tie upon him; and next morning, at nine o'clock, he got on the mail, and came home with me, as quiet and obedient as a child."

"There was evidently some good feeling in Richard Lyall." So said his mother's solicitor to me three years after this, when, in talking of the sacrifice his mother was obliged to make from her small income to keep her son from gaol (for his liabilities swallowed up more than the value of his own estate), he said, it is but fair to own, that at the time of his father's death Mr. Lyall would have settled any portion of the property we had chosen to propose.

How £10,000 could be sunk in about three years, I have no space to tell. College debts, which he estimated at £300, amounted to £1,200! But the last blow of all was this—he was tempted to join in bills for two friends, on condition that they

should lend their joint names to him. They fled the country, and he was sued for all. The debts were disputed; but expensive litigation, and such conduct on the part of his first solicitor as rendered it advisable, after three years of legal business, to transfer all the affairs into the hands of a second, swallowed up the whole estate, and left Richard Lyall with all the remorse of having nearly beggared his widowed mother, unable to take a degree, without employment, and dependent on relations of small means, whose kindness concedes what their prudence would deny.

This narrative I would particularly recommend to the consideration not only of undergraduates, but of their parents and friends. I have taken the opinion of many members of each university on the subject of college debts; and the remedies which are suggested are these:

First of all, no legislation will do the least good. Supposing that all debts contracted, not only by minors, but by those *in statu pupillari*, were void in law, I appeal to any university man to say whether they would not be proportionably more binding in honour. Oxford tradesmen, and almost all other tradesmen, give credit on the faith of honour, and not of law. The chief use of the law of debt is to enable a creditor to punish a swindling debtor. It is of very little use against those who will not pay. Certainly very few tradesmen in Oxford would serve a customer if they contemplated the probability of having to sue for payment. The law of debt comes in, when it is used at all, as a mere after-thought, and is very little the basis of credit. Even if it did, to withdraw the protection of law would raise prices, but would not diminish credit.

The remedy against debt is in the hands of parents. Let them accustom their sons to the management of money, by giving them an allowance to find clothes, for instance, and pocket-money together.

Again, every father of common sense should take it for granted, not, as is too common, that his son is not in debt at the end of his first term, but rather that he is in debt. Let him then go to college and ask his son in an encouraging way to tell him the name of every creditor, however small may be his bill; for no debt can possibly remain small long: you must either pay or increase it. Let this be repeated at the end of the third term, and again about the eighth or ninth, and the public will soon cease to be shocked by accounts of college extravagance.

Every undergraduate should have a fixed allowance. Battels should be paid separately by the parents, as also may books, clothes, and wine, so that the calculation may be the more easy. Vigilance on the part of the parent, however, will still be requisite, because when young men feel they have outrun, they will not, without the exercise of some tact and encouragement, send all their bills home.

And lastly, a parent had better either make his son an allowance sufficient to enable him to keep the society to which he expects him to aspire, or else he should keep him away from the university altogether. £230 a year, exclusive of private tutors, if required, furniture, caution money, and fees at entrance and degree, is the smallest sum I would recommend at any college; even £300 a year may be spent without extravagance. This, however, will not admit of any expenditure for horses except a ride, on an average, about once a week. A man of experience might keep a horse on £300 a year, but I would not advise any undergraduate to attempt it; for it is difficult to prevent the society of riding-men leading to greater expenses in many other respects besides horse hire.

With these hints it is humbly hoped that most of the advantages of either Oxford or Cambridge may be secured, and most of the temptations avoided.

THE END.

JUMPED.

A TALE OF THE KIMBERLEY RACES.

CHAPTER I.

IT was in the flush times on the Diamond Fields; those days afterwards remembered, in the bad times which came so soon, with so much wondering regret. In those days every one had made money out of shares and confidently hoped to make much more. Shares and companies were talked about morning, noon, and night; and what more delightful topic for conversation could any one wish to have? for in those days every one held shares, and those shares, independently of what they were in or where the ground possessed by the company was situated, went up every hour, so that, except when a 'public benefactor did something unusually criminal or eccentric, so giving the Diamond Field public a subject for much interesting talk, no one discussed and no one wished to discuss anything else.

For a short time, however, when the mania was at its very height, shares became a subject of secondary interest, and for a time the forthcoming Kimberley races took its place. With a characteristic unanimity and zest the public of the four camps began to talk, think, and speculate about the races. Passing the open doors of bars and canteens one heard scraps of conversation about weight for age, Newmarket rules, and the home performances of the imported horses which were going to run.

The sporting division scented the carcase from afar, and thought with glee of the abundance of money there was in the camp and the enthusiasm for sport which had come over the public. The big event of the races was the Diggers' Stakes, a handicap, for which the weights were out, and very little admiration was expressed for the wisdom of the stewards who had made it. What with those who knew something about racing and had games of their own to play, and those who knew nothing about it but, though honest and ignorant, were too self-important to stand aside and refrain from taking any part in it, men said that the handicapping was absurd. They said there were only two horses in it which had any chance—Mr. Musters' Our Boy and Mr. Saul Gideon's The Pirate. They were both of them imported horses, and the former had won a race or two in England;

both were four-year-olds. Besides these there was one other imported horse, Captain Brereton's Kildare, and a good many colonial horses. Kildare was said to be lame, and the handicappers had not given the colonial horses a chance; in fact it was hardly a handicap at all, as two favourites carried not much more than weight for age. That evening Mr. Saul Gideon had come into the Claimholders' Club in Kimberley with a glare in his hard black eyes and a twitching of his claw-like hands that might well have warned any one who knew him that he was dangerous. Mr. Gideon was a sport, not a sportsman—anything but that—but certainly a sport. In any pastime on which money could be risked by way of wagering he took an interest. Before the law put down those institutions he had, with great profit to himself, kept a gambling saloon. When prize-fights occurred every now and then, just over the border of the Free State (the P. R. is or was an institution on the Diamond Fields) he had much to do with getting them up, and sometimes would have much to do with settling their issue in a peaceable and humane manner before the men went into the ring. In fact there were few sporting frauds on the Diamond Fields but Saul Gideon had a finger in the pie. He probably only just could tell the difference between a dray-horse and a racer, but he was satisfied he was clever enough to hold his own and win money at racing, and perhaps with reason, for success such as he coveted requires rather a knowledge of men than of horses. The Claimholders' Club was crowded with men who were talking about the races, and Mr. Gideon had not to wait long before they began to discuss the event in which he was interested, the Diggers' Stakes.

"Take moy tip, boys," said Dr. Buckeen, an Irish medical man much given to racing, who in his time had done a good deal to maintain in South Africa the character which Irish sporting men have gained for themselves at home; "there is only one in it, that's The Pirate; never mind about Our Boy and the race he won at Sandown. I know all about it, I was there and saw, and after the race Lord Swellington, who owned the horses that ran second and third, came up to me and said, 'Buck, me boy'—all them fellows call me Buck—'Buck, me boy,' me lord said, 'be crimes, that wore the biggest robbery I ever wore in.'"

"But Lord Swellington wouldn't say 'be crimes,' he is not an Irishman," said one of the doctor's audience.

"Deed he did, though, to chaff me; the old devil is always chaffing me, we are like brothers."

"But, doctor, you could not have seen Our Boy win that race at Sandown; you weren't home that year," said another objector.

"Not home that year?" said the doctor, taken rather aback. "That's all you know about it. But never mind, what I say is that The Pirate will win the Diggers' Stakes."

"That's all you know about it, Buckeen," said a tall man with a red nose and a squint, who looked as if he were gazing at the bottles behind the bar though he really was watching Mr. Gideon.

"I will take a thousand to five hundred from any one," said Buckeen, who liked to talk loudly about bets which no one who knew him would think of making or dream of his ever intending to pay.

"Not from me, Buckeen," said the tall man, whose name was Crotty, as he continued to squint hideously while he watched Mr. Gideon.

Mr. Crotty was remembering a little battle at the noble game of poker which he once engaged in with Mr. Gideon. On that occasion he—Crotty—had been dealt four kings; and as at last they showed their hands after much money had been staked, Mr. Gideon had said, "For the first time in my life, believe me—though I have played since I was a lad in California, in '49—four aces." And as he remembered this little episode in his life and watched Mr. Gideon he hoped soon to be even with him.

"Bedad, I must go and see after me patients. I am just murthered be the work I have to do in me profession," said Buckeen, and he swaggered out of the club.

"Well, Mr. Crotty," said Gideon when the doctor had gone, "what will you do about the stakes?"

"Even money against The Pirate," was Mr. Crotty's answer.

"It is odds against my horse. Come, I will take two to one," said Gideon.

Mr. Crotty only shook his head and asked Mr. Gideon to take a drink with him, which offer the other excused himself from accepting on the plea that he had to go and see a man on business. "See you again in half an hour or so," he said, as he left the club to visit several other places where betting men congregated.

However, he found there was not much to be done about his horse; betting men, like politicians, like to know how the cat jumps before they commit themselves to any great extent; and there was a tendency to wait a bit before doing much about "the Stakes."

After half an hour Mr. Gideon returned to the Claimholders' Club, looking more restless and anxious than ever.

"Will you lay me six to four?" he asked Mr. Crotty, who was still there.

"Even money," answered Crotty, who was a man of few words.

For a minute or two Mr. Gideon said nothing, then he gulped down his drink, and clearing his throat said:

"I hate fiddling about with one bet here and one bet there. Will you lay me a good big bet at even money?"

"I am not a millionaire, like you Diamond-Field men," answered Crotty, "but I will lay you an even thousand against The Pirate."

"I will take that," said Gideon.

Mr. Crotty produced his betting book and wrote down the bet
“Will you double it?” said Gideon.

“You want to sell me up,” said Crotty, “but I will double it,” and again he wrote in his book.

Mr. Gideon felt sure that Crotty would go on a little more, but something told him that he had better wait a bit. “I will see Nat first,” he said to himself; and he left the club, followed by the inquiring glances of most of the men who were present, for the bet he had made was a large one and excited a good deal of interest.

When Mr. Gideon left the club he got into a Cape cart, and was driven to an hotel near some stables, on the outskirts of the camp.

An undersized man, with a look of Newmarket about him, which South Africa had not erased, who was sitting in the bar of the hotel, got up and went out when Mr. Gideon touched him on the shoulder. Mr. Gideon told him what he had done at the club, and the little man received his news with a long whistle.

“You’re so clever, ain’t you?” he said, as he eyed Mr. Gideon with unconcealed scorn. “You don’t look like a blessed infant with that nose on you, but blessed if you don’t be’ave like one.”

“You ought to remember your proper place more,” said Mr. Gideon, “and let me tell you something you don’t know. See here,” and he produced a telegram, “Our Boy has broken down.”

“And don’t you think Crotty knew that? Why, I heard it just now,” answered the little man, “and a lot it matters; Kildare will win these stakes.”

“He is no good; and he is lame.”

“Lame? A party as knows what he sees saw him striding along at Buffelsfontein, where Captain Brereton has him as sound as a bell.”

“But my horse can beat Kildare,” said Gideon.

“Not weight for age he couldn’t, if what I hears is true. Only just now I got a letter from home about him, from a pal of mine. Fit and well, he is the best horse that ever came to this country, and fit and well he is. And your horse don’t meet him weight for age, you give him seven pounds; those precious stewards seem to have forgotten all about him,” answered Nat.

“What’s to be done? What shall I do for all that money? I can’t lose two thou’, and it seemed so good. Oh dear! oh dear me!” Gideon almost sobbed out.

“Well, it ain’t lost yet, guvner. Kildare might go wrong,” said Nat Lane with an evil grin.

“Oh, what a blessing that would be. Don’t you think now, Nat, something might be done?”

“The captain looks after the horse night and day, nothing could be done on the quiet; but Buffels is a very solitary place to keep a valuable animal like Kildare. Look here, now, suppose you put me on a thou’ of that two thou’. I might show you how to save that bet, and make a good bit more.”

After a little haggling Mr. Gideon consented to give Nat Lane a thou' if Kildare was made a dead 'un and The Pirate won.

"It will have to be done with a rush if it is done at all, but there is a party in camp just now who can do the job if any man can, and I will go and see him," said Nat. "It's no good your coming, I will drop round to your place afterwards."

Mr. Gideon walked off feeling much out of sorts and out of conceit with himself. His old acquaintance Crotty had got the best of him and had known just as much as he did and a little more when he made the bet. When Mr. Gideon left him Nat Lane walked back into the town, or camp, as it was more often called, though its canvas age was over and it was gradually changing from iron to brick, and turning up a street by the side of the mine, which had already, though Kimberley was not ten years old, acquired a very evil reputation, made his way to a canteen known as the Red Bar. This establishment, which consisted of one room, billiard-room and bar combined, seemed to be doing a roaring business. A perspiring barman was hard at work opening bottles of champagne, spirits, and soda-water, while two very smartly-dressed young women were busy serving the crowd of customers who thronged round the bar, and at the same time carrying on a conversation with a favoured few. The majority of the company had an unmistakable Jewish type of face, but there were men of every other white race there. Few if any towns three times the size of Kimberley could produce such a choice selection of scoundrels as the guests at the Red Bar, and Jews and Gentiles alike bore on their faces a hunted, a bird-of-prey look which denoted that they were at enmity with the honest portion of society. The most conspicuous figure in the place was that of a tall dark man, whose face might have been called a handsome one were it not for his sinister expression, exaggerated by a scar which reached from his mouth to his eye, and seemed to stand out all the more as the drink which he was taking flushed his face. From the way in which he lounged against the bar, taking up more room than three or four men might have done, though there were many men trying to get up to it to be served, and from the silence which was kept when he was speaking and the laughter with which his not over-brilliant remarks were received, it was clear that he was a man who had managed to gain the respect of his associates.

"Bill, I want to speak to you; I can put you on to a good job," Nat Lane whispered into his ear.

"Right; if there are good prices in it, for I want some. They cleared me out at faro properly last night," he answered as he left the bar and went out with Nat Lane. "Now, then, what do you want?" he said when they were outside.

"It's like this: I can put you on to a good game, for I suppose

you're on the same lay up yonder you were always on, and have one or two working with you?"

"Yes, fire away and speak clear," said Bill.

"Well, Brereton has got two or three horses at Buffelsfontein, which would be well worth getting hold of; one of them is worth a thousand pounds almost."

"That's no good game—too risky, and I couldn't get much for the captain's horse. People who buy racers want to know more about them than I tell when I sell a horse."

"That could be managed all right, Bill," said Nat. "If you only got the horse away there would be a good bit of money to come to you. And I take it you would sooner take a good horse than a bad one any day; besides there are the captain's two horses. I think I know how the job could be done."

Then the two men had a long conversation, and it was arranged between them that Nat Lane's acquaintance, whose name was Bill Bledshaw and whose place of residence was a kraal over the border in Bechuanaland near Tawns, where he carried on the fine old-fashioned calling of a cattle-lifter and horse-stealer, should find out when Brereton was going to take Kildare and his other horses into Kimberley and with a party of his comrades surprise Brereton, seize the horses, and carry them over the border.

Buffels Drift was not very far from the border, and there was a place which Bill knew of where he could surprise Brereton and get the horses. As soon as he had got away with Kildare he was to send a messenger back to Kimberley, who would let Nat Lane know that the plot had been successful, and give the confederates an opportunity of betting against the horse, which would be far away when the Diggers' Stakes was run. Bill Bledshaw stood out for a good share of the spoil, for it was a very risky job, which would create much indignation against him on the Diamond Fields and perhaps lead to his arrest; but Nat Lane managed to dispel his scruples and before they parted the two worthies had a drink together to the success of their venture, Bill Bledshaw promising to start the next morning for his head-quarters near Tawns, where he could complete his arrangements and see one "Long Alex," who would work the job with him.

CHAPTER II.

"BY JOVE, no horse in this forsaken country ever galloped like that before," said Jack Brereton, as he stood outside his house at Buffelsfontein and watched Kildare leave his other horse, The Muffin Man, as if the latter was standing still.

Those horses and his pony Nobbler represented pretty nearly all Jack Brereton's possessions, except the money he had already invested on Kildare's chance for the Diggers' Stakes.

After having speculated in claims, diamonds, ostriches, and sheep he had taken to the more congenial pursuit of putting his capital into thoroughbreds, and so far he had not done very badly in that somewhat risky investment.

About eighteen months before, he had bought *The Muffin Man*, a colonial-bred racer, with some money he had made in a lucky digging venture. As he rode and trained his horse himself he was not robbed as other owners were, and had won several races at Kimberley, Cradock, and Port Elizabeth. He had bought *Kildare* with the money made by the other, having commissioned an old brother-officer in England to buy a useful racer that was better than anything in South Africa. *Kildare* was an Irish-bred horse, and had been sold rather cheaply after his former owner had been warned off the turf for having him pulled in a two-year-old race. It was a shame, so Jack's friend said, to send such a good horse to South Africa, but he felt bound to do his best for Jack.

Jack Brereton was about thirty-five, and though he was as active as he ever was, and seemed to take life cheerily as he always did, his years had told on him more than men would at first think.

The last ten years of his life had been spent in the colonies, the five years before that at home in a light cavalry regiment, and very marked was the contrast between them, though the Jack Brereton of the latter days and the former was outwardly much the same man, a little harder perhaps and more able to take care of himself, but the same light-hearted, happy-go-lucky fellow. The colonies are full of men whose lives have gone all askew—misfits well made enough, one would have thought, but all wrong when they are tried on. Jack Brereton seemed to be fit for something better than the adventurer and gambler he had drifted into becoming. There was the making of a good soldier in him, only he had gone to grief somehow and had to sell out.

He was a good deal more shrewd in his knowledge of character and business than many a man who had succeeded on the Diamond Fields by sticking to his work instead of drifting from one thing to another as he had done. He was well liked and to a certain extent admired by almost every one from the administrator of the province downwards, but he never got any appointment, though there were several billets he might very well have filled. Sometimes he had been very much down on his luck, sometimes he had experienced a run of good fortune, but he kept his bad or ill luck to himself and was always in excellent spirits. Every one said he was a good fellow and many half envied his light heart and good spirits. Of late he had lived a good deal out of Kimberley, looking after his horses, and the visits he paid to camp every now and then were the occasion of much revelry; very late hours being kept at the club, where men would sit up listening to his stories and bantering chaff till long past the usual hour for closing that establishment; but for all that men who knew him

best thought they often saw a sad, wistful look in his eyes, and that in his laugh there was an after-sound of bitterness and melancholy.

As he watched Kildare gallop he was full of hope and excitement, and he felt certain that he would win the Diggers' Stakes with him.

"Yes, captain, fit and well, the other horses won't be very near him. But I wish the race were over and won; they seem to be doing a lot of betting on it at the Fields, laying two to one on Kildare, but there are lots of takers. The Pirate's lot have backed their horse for a lot of money, and won't lose it if they can help," said a rough-looking man with a broken nose and scarred face, who was standing by the side of Jack Brereton.

"They will have to lose it whether they like it or not. It's a pity you can't come back to Kimberley with us, I know you would like to see the little horse win."

"Yes, captain, I'd like it dearly, but I shouldn't be let see the race if I did come back; the man I hammered is so blarned vindictive that he would have me stuck in quod before I was in camp an hour. You see, his being a policeman makes it awkward. No, when you start I will just foot it in the other direction—Christiana way—wishing you good luck in the race."

"There is twenty pound on for you, Tom, if he wins, remember," said Brereton, as he followed the horses back to their stables.

Tom Bats was a not very excellent character who had once been in Jack Brereton's regiment, and for a short time was his soldier-servant. He was not a bad-natured man, but unsteady, hot-tempered, and pugnacious. Jack Brereton had liked him very well, and he had from the first a wonderful affection and admiration for "the captain." Strangely enough, both of them drifted to the Diamond Fields, where they met again, and very rejoiced was Tom Bats to see his old master. On the Diamond Fields Tom did not become a reformed character; he was straight, as the saying there was, and did not buy diamonds or do anything that was dishonest, but was much given to going on the spree and punching heads, and had on several occasions given the police a great deal of trouble.

Unfortunately, when on the spree he had fallen foul of a policeman against whom he had an old grudge, and had knocked the guardian of the peace about severely, thus making Kimberley too warm for him, and obliging him to start off at once for some place of refuge.

He had turned up at Buffelsfontein, where Jack Brereton gave him shelter and food for some days, and employed him looking after the horses, for Jack was not quite certain that though Buffelsfontein was a quiet place some forty miles from Kimberley, it would not be worth some one's while to pay it a visit and try and get at Kildare.

"Look 'ere, captain," said Tom after Jack had left the tables,

"I think I had better come back with you to-morrow, it's rather a lonely journey for you to take with such valuable property as the horses, and no one but the Kaffir boys with you. I will see you as far as the camp and then turn back again."

"No, you shan't do that ; what's the good ? It's lonely, but it's as safe a road as any high-road in England ; no one will harm the horse when I am by, it's at night that I am afraid of it." Tom Bats felt that this was about true, so he said no more, and settled to leave for Christians the next morning, when Jack and the horses started for Kimberley.

The next morning Jack started for Kimberley riding his pony Nobbler, Kildare and The Muffin Man being ridden by two little bushmen who were in his service. It was a dreary journey from Buffels Drift to Kimberley, only one or two farm-houses were on the way, and a great part of the road was deep sand through which the horses laboured painfully. Jack had arranged for the horses to be put up at a farm-house on the way, so he took the journey easily enough ; and as he rode along a little behind the others, he looked at Kildare and added up the money which he felt confident that he could win with the brave little horse. Kildare was a black horse—not very big. At first sight one would think that he was not quite big enough to hold his own, but any good judge would recognize that he was good enough if he were big enough ; and when one saw him stride along one forgot about his being on a small scale.

The Diggers' Stakes would come to about five hundred pounds ; besides that Jack had about a thousand pounds in bets for that race, for he stood half of the bet Crotty had laid Gideon. It was hard luck not being able to get odds about the horse, but as several people in Kimberley knew how good the horse was, and that the theory of his being lame which, somehow or the other, had got about, was false, it was necessary to get this money on the race at the best terms they could. Though Kildare had been actually backed for very little by either Brereton or Crotty, for the latter had only bet against The Pirate, he was the favourite, with slight odds laid on him, and it would not be easy to back him to win much at any reasonable price. Still, there would be his lottery, which would come to some five hundred pounds or so more, and perhaps it would be possible to get a little more money on, but it was a pity that he could not make more of a *coup*. There was another race on the record which he hoped to win with Kildare, and he might win the Licensed Victuallers' Plate with The Muffin Man. Altogether Jack hoped, with what he could win and with the price he could get for his horses, which he intended to sell, he would be worth about five thousand pounds after the races. As he watched Kildare stepping along he thought that he would like him home to England and win a big handicap with him, as he believed he could ; but his good sense

told him that it would be better to sell the horse on the Fields. With the money that he would have after the races he determined he would clear out of the country, and either go home, where he might get something, or to some other colony. It is ill counting your chickens before they are hatched. As Jack was thinking what he would do with the money he would win he had come to a place where the road ran between some mountains, and where by the side of the road there was a good deal of thick bush. Just there some Kaffirs who were coming from the direction of Kimberley were passing the horses; they looked as if they had been working in the mines and were going back to the kraals up country, and Jack paid very little attention to them. Suddenly he was startled by seeing them close round the two horses, Muffin Man and Kildare, and take hold of their bridles.

In a second he had whipped out a revolver and was riding up to them, when a man with crape on his face jumped from the bushes by the road and struck him a heavy blow on the head with a knob kevvy, which stretched him on the ground senseless.

When he came to again he found two white men with crape round their faces engaged in tying him up with a rope, which they knotted in a way that would puzzle the Davenport brothers. When they had finished they carried him away from the road along a water-course which came down from the hills. He did his best to struggle, but it was no use for he was helpless. As he was carried along he saw that the two horses and his pony were in the possession of the enemy, and the two bushmen were also captive and were being carried off by some of the Kaffirs.

"Now, then, take it easy and keep quiet, or the rope will choke you," said one of the men as he secured Jack to the tree with an elaborated and improved Tom Fool's knot. "Well, you might as well have a smoke, there is nothing like making the best of things," he added as he pushed a cigar into Jack's mouth and struck a light. There was some sense in this, so Jack pulled at the cigar.

"So long, boss," said the man who had spoken before, and after gazing at his workmanship with some pride he walked away with the other. Jack could hear them laugh as they crashed through the bushes, and he thought he heard one say:

"What about Kildare for the Stakes?" Then voices were farther and farther off and he was left alone to himself. Of course he began to try and get out of the knots, but there was no doubt about it that the man who tied him up was a master of his craft, and the rope round his neck tightened when he tried to struggle against the knots. Then he began to shout out, but that was no use; there was probably no one near and the echo of his voice seemed to mock him. Then he kept quiet and tried to enjoy smoking. He might possibly burn the rope with the lighted end of his cigar, he thought; trying to do this gave him

occupation for some little time, but he did not succeed though he could just touch the rope with the end of the cigar, and at last the cigar burnt shorter and he was unable to touch the rope with it, and then he began to cough and it fell out of his mouth. Then he began to think of the wretched plight he was in. The remark he thought he heard made him believe that the object of stealing the horse was to prevent his winning the Stakes; but for all that they would have to pay unless they could prove collusion between the men who had made the bets and the horse-thieves, and that would not be very easy.

Hour after hour passed, and he began to think that if he were only free he would not mind about anything else, though if he lost all his bets, and lost his horses, he would be without a penny in the world—in fact, he would be hardly able to pay his losses. Then he remembered that it was the day the mail-cart passed along that road, and he calculated the time at which it would pass. It was about nine o'clock in the morning when he had been tied, and at about sunset the cart would pass, judging by the time at which it generally left Buffel's Drift. He could not see the road from where he was, and the sand would prevent him hearing the cart as it came along; but as the sun went down and the time for the cart came near, he kept up a shouting, his voice growing hoarser and weaker, as lie was afraid, every minute. At last the welcome sound came of some one coming through the bushes, and he heard in Dutch an exclamation of astonishment. It was the driver of the mail-cart who had heard shouting, and fortunately, as there was a passenger in the cart who could hold the rein, had got out to see what was the matter. The man was provokingly slow, staring at him stupidly for a little time and expressing his surprise again and again, but at last he cut the ropes and helped Jack, who was unable to walk, his limbs being all cramped, to get to the cart.

About four hours after they had parted at Buffelsfontein, Tom Bats was taking a spell, having done about ten miles of his journey to Christiana. His thoughts were with Captain Brereton and Kildare and he kept regretting that he was not with them and that he should not be on the race-course to see the horse win the Diggers' Plate. Though he knew that Brereton was very well able to look after himself and his horses, and that when he came into the camp he would have the advantage of sage advice from Mr. Crotty, who was as sharp as most men, he felt somewhat mistrustful. The lot who were backing The Pirate would not stick at a trifile. He knew something of Mr. Gideon. Once when he had been matched to fight a man for fifty pounds a side, that worthy had tried to drug him when he found he would not be squared, and he would be up to the same sort of game with the little horse, he was afraid.

Well, he had better be getting on, he thought, as he knocked the

ashes out of his pipe, and filled it up again. Just then he saw some men riding towards him, along a road which some miles south cut into the road from Buffelsfontein to Kimberley. They seemed to be some white men and some Kaffirs, all on horseback. As they came nearer Tom gave a start, nearly jumped up, but in a second crouched down amongst the bushes.

He recognized two of the men, Bill Bledshaw and Long Alex; but that was not what alarmed him. What startled him was that he saw that Bill Bledshaw was riding The Muffin Man, while one of the Kaffirs was on Kildare, and another on Captain Brereton's pony Nobbler. It did not take him long to understand what had taken place. Captain Brereton had been robbed, they had got the horses from him and were taking them away to Tawns, where Bledshaw's head-quarters were. Tom felt very concerned about Brereton's fate, for though he did not suppose that Bill would harm him more than he could help, he knew that Brereton would not let the horses go without a fight unless he were taken by surprise; but even if he were fit and well he would be in a sorry plight, Tom Bats thought, if he did not get back Kildare. "This is Master Gideon's little game," he said to himself, and he thought it would be worth a trip to Kimberley, dangerous though it would be, to have the pleasure of smashing that gentleman's evil-looking face in. There were two white men and four or five Kaffirs, so it was useless to show himself and fight for the horses. Long Alex and Bill were both very awkward customers, and were sure to be well armed. About six miles off there was a place called Gordon, where there usually were one or two of the mounted police, but before he could get there and give information to the police, Bill would have the horses over the border; and Tom Bats was by no means eager to come across any of the mounted police, for they would most likely recognize him and know about the warrant there was against him.

Near where Tom Bats was resting there was a pool of water, and when the horsemen came up to the place they off-saddled, the two white men throwing themselves down on the ground under a tree for a rest.

Tom Bats' heart began to beat, for he saw his chance when one of the Kaffirs took Kildare and another horse down to the water. He had a heavy iron-bound knob-kevvy, and clutching it with a grip that meant business he sneaked from the bush he was hiding behind to the water, without the Kaffir seeing him. Then when he had got close to the water he sprang up, and was on his man with a rush, dealing him one heavy blow with his stick. In a second he had jumped Kildare's back and was riding as hard as he could in the direction of Gordon. The other Kaffirs had seen him, and as he rode he could hear them shouting out and waking up the white men, and turning round he saw that Long Alex had snatched up a carbine and was pointing it at him, while Bill was

mounting The Muffin Man, to give him chase. Long Alex's bullet whirled unpleasantly near him, but the ground, which sloped down a little, gave him a little cover. There was no saddle on Kildare, though his bridle was on, and Tom Bats, though he had been a trooper in a cavalry regiment, was by no means a finished horseman; still he was able to stick on. Long Alex had run up to the brow of the hill and there he took another shot, it was a long shot, but this time it hit, and Kildare stumbled as Tom let the rein fall loose over his head, as his shattered left arm fell helpless to his side. He was not hit so badly that he could not stick on. Bill on The Muffin Man was sticking to the chase, and he waved his hat and gave a yell when he saw Long Alex's shot had taken effect. Tom Bats felt himself growing weaker every second, and for once in his life he longed to see the cord uniform of a mounted policeman as he rode on, longing to get to Gordon in safety—for the horse, that is to say, but for himself by no means a desirable haven.

"Hullo, that's a nice-looking horse; this looks a queer start, too," Sergeant Brown of the mounted police, who was lounging in the verandah of the one store at Gordon—the rising township of the future, which consisted at present of a farm-house, a store, and some tents belonging to the police, but which had a Market square, a Main street, a Church street, and several other streets, only the houses had not yet been put up—said, as Tom Bats rode up on Kildare :

"Now, then, hold up, man!" he cried out, as Tom fell off the horse's back in a swoon when he tried to get off. "By George, though, I think we want this gentleman; there is a warrant out for Bats, isn't there, Jim?" he said to a police trooper, who was standing by, after he had picked up Tom and brought him into the store.

"Yer right, sergeant, I am the man and there is a warrant; bat never mind me, look after the horse—Captain Brereton's Kildare, favourite for Diggers' Stakes; they got Bill Bledshaw to jump him, and I have jumped him from Bill. Look after the little horse; he has been knocked about fearfully to-day," said Tom, getting fainter and queerer as he spoke.

The sergeant gave some orders about the horse, then looked after Tom Bats, whom he saw to be a good deal hurt, and when he was revived a little asked him more about the whereabouts of Bill Bledshaw.

It happened that the sergeant took a good deal of interest in the Kimberley races, and he at once shared Tom Bats' suspicion that Bill was acting for some one else; so thinking it would be a capital thing if those who plotted to get Kildare out of the way were caught in their own trap, he said nothing about Kildare having turned up in the letter he wrote to the authorities, while he wrote another letter, to be opened by either Brereton or Crotty,

saying the horse was safe and did not seem much the worse. After he had sent off these letters by a Kaffir on a horse he started off with two policemen—all the force he had—to see if he could come across Bill Bledshaw.

CHAPTER III.

"It's all right, now go and back The Pirate for what you can get," said Nat Lane, as he came into Mr. Gideon's house, where that gentleman had been waiting for some hours on the day of Jack Brereton's misadventure in a fever of excitement.

"Are you sure he has done it all right?" asked Gideon.

"Certain; I have got this," and Nat showed the other a piece of paper on which the words "Done the job all right" were written. "That's what we settled that he was to write; a boy just brought it me. Now you go and look for clever Mr. Crotty, we ought to have him for a good bit."

Mr. Gideon at once started off to make prompt use of his information. First he went to two men who usually worked with him, and were in this robbery to a certain extent, and commissioned them to back The Pirate and lay against Kildare; then he tried to find Crotty, whom he intended to make his chief victim. They had made Kildare a very hot favourite. In fact, with the exception of The Pirate there was no other horse backed. It happened that Mr. Crotty had gone to the river that day, so Mr. Gideon was destined to be disappointed of his prey, and waited up hour after hour at the club without meeting him, for Mr. Crotty on his return had supper at the house of the men he had gone to the river with, and then had gone straight to bed. After he had been in bed some hours he was roused by a knock at the door of his own house, and opening it let in Jack Brereton.

"They have done us," said Jack, as he helped himself to a brandy and soda, the materials for which were on the table.

"What do you mean? they have not got at Kildare?"

"Got at him? They have got him," said Jack, and he told his story.

Very furious did Mr. Crotty become as he listened to it; he at once came to the conclusion that Mr. Gideon had something to do with it. However, he saw that it would be very difficult to prove any knowledge, and saw that he would have to pay the bets he would lose. They talked for some hours, but were not able to comfort each other or devise any scheme for getting the horse back. Mr. Crotty took his loss very well, and did not, as many a man in his place would have done, blame Jack at all for it. He was a somewhat sharp customer, was Mr. Crotty, by no means scrupulous when he was dealing with outsiders, but he was straight to his

friends, and he really felt as sorry for Jack as for himself, though perhaps his first feeling was bitter anger against Gideon.

"Well, it is no good stopping up all night talking," he said at last, and he got a mattress and some blankets for Jack.

In the morning Jack was woken up by hearing a cry of triumph from Crotty.

The letter from Gordon had come and Crotty had read it. "We have got 'em," he cried as he gave the letter to Jack. They were both delighted; the only question was whether the horse would be much the worse for its knocking about. They came to the conclusion that they would chance that, as the note said the horse was all right, and they believed he could win on three legs. "Then leave me to deal with Mr. Gideon," Crotty said as he dressed; "I will take care to come across him this morning."

That morning it was all over the camp that Bill Bledshaw had jumped Kildare, and great was the consternation amongst the backers of the favourite, and the rejoicing of a section of the Jews who had backed The Pirate. Mr. Gideon was afraid that it would be too late to victimize Mr. Crotty, though for a minute or two as the latter came into the club, looking by no means out of spirits, he felt a little hopeful.

"Well, how's The Pirate?" he said to Gideon.

"Fit as he could be. Will you go on laying against him?" answered Gideon.

"Now why are you so keen about backing The Pirate this morning? Not because you have heard about Bill Bledshaw jumping Kildare?" said Crotty with a grin on his face, "but I think we shall sell you by getting him back from Bill."

Mr. Gideon could not help laughing to himself, the idea of Bill's being persuaded to give up the horse or allowing it to leave him fit to run for the Stakes seemed too absurd.

Then the two had a long conversation, which ended in Mr. Gideon laying the other three thousand to one thousand against Kildare, and stipulating that the money should be staked by that day, as he thought that he would win about as much from Gideon and his confederates as that division would think it worth while to pay.

There was a lot of excitement all over the camp when it was known how Jack Brereton had been robbed. Jack had nothing to say but that the story was true; he took his bad luck as he had taken bad luck before, wonderfully coolly, but to his friends—and most "white men" in the camp were his friends—he imparted the advice not to be in a hurry to bet against Kildare. "The little horse will win for all you have heard," he said.

Most felt that Jack did not speak without reason, and a good many took the odds which the Jews were eager to lay on their horse The Pirate; and this state of things went on for some days, all sorts of stories going about as to the chances of the missing

horse being got back, at which stories Mr. Gideon was very much amused.

It was one morning just a week before the races that he was undeceived, and received rather a rude shock.

"Altogether I stand about ten thousand to five. Some of it I have laid on The Pirate, some against Kildare; Barney and Ike Sloeman have done half as much again between 'em! Where the money comes from I don't know. S'help me, I can't see what they are all backing a horse that Bill Bledshaw has jumped," said Gideon, who was one of a group of people watching the horses gallop on the race-course that morning, to Nat Lane.

"It's just as well for us that there are some fools," answered that worthy.

"Do you think any other horse has a chance of beating The Pirate? I heard something about May Morn."

"Never mind what you hear; that May Morn looks like having a big chance, don't it?" said Nat pointing to a horse that was coming round. "Hullo! What's that Captain Brereton is on?" he added with an exclamation of surprise; "how he comes along."

Jack Brereton was on Kildare, which had been brought into the camp the night before, and even a tyro like Mr. Gideon could see that the game little horse was of a very different class from the plater on the course.

"Now, then, Mr. Gideon, what price Kildare? What price, Bill Bledshaw?" shouted Mr. Crotty, who was standing near with a group of men round him, as he burst into a peal of mocking laughter, in which the others joined.

"The little horse is not much the worse for your kind attentions," he added.

"Curse 'em, but they have done us," said Nat Lane between his teeth. Mr. Gideon turned pale, the mocking laughter of Crotty and his friends maddened him; he was ruined, for the money he had staked represented all that he had in the world; his only hope was that still The Pirate might somehow win, and this hope was a very feeble one.

Shout after shout of laughter came from the men on the course, who seemed all to have been let into the secret by Crotty, and followed by the jeers of their enemies Mr. Gideon and Nat Lane got into a cart and were driven back to Kimberley.

There is not much more to tell of the story of the Diggers' Stakes that year. It was a procession rather than a race, for Kildare won with the greatest ease from The Pirate, while the rest of the field were beaten off. Great was the rejoicing amongst good fellows on the Diamond Fields, and bitter were the lamentations of a certain division of the sharps, who had for once been shorn.

Mr. Gideon paid, for he was afraid if he did not an attempt would have been made to prove that he had something to do with

stealing Kildare, and very anxious was he for some time lest Bill Bledshaw, who was afterwards caught before he got rid of Brereton's other horses, should give evidence against him. It remains only to say that Tom Bats had the pleasure of seeing Kildare win. His arm was well enough to allow him to be brought into Kimberley, and public feeling was so much in his favour as the man who had rescued Kildare from the enemy, that the magistrate took a lenient view of the charge of assault on which he was brought up, and only inflicted a fine, which in a few minutes was raised for him by subscriptions of those who had backed Kildare.

DALRYMPLE BELGRAVE.

COOKERY CLASSES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

ARE THEY BENEFICIAL AND PRACTICALLY WORKABLE?

IT is no doubt rather a difficult matter to say with accuracy what degree of public interest in any great question or subject suffices to bring that question within the range of practical politics, and possibly it is even more difficult to measure the public interest by the modes in which it finds expression. The question which is before us, however, and which may to all intents and purposes be rendered as "What brings cookery or any given subject within the range of practical education?" is no longer a moot point, and may be answered with the utmost ease and clearness. When any such subject has received the sanction of the Education Department, and has been endowed with a grant, it is at once brought within the sphere of practical education, and just as with the political question we should expect to see it speedily taken up by great politicians and statesmen, so in the latter case we should anticipate speedy action on the part of educationists, both theoretical and practical.

Cookery as a school lesson does undoubtedly comply with these conditions, and has taken its place as a part of practical education. It is a specific subject, ranking for girls with algebra, Euclid, &c., for boys, and by a comparatively small expenditure of time—forty hours in the whole school year—each child satisfying the inspector can obtain a grant of four shillings. Yet in spite of this the subject is not taken up in schools to anything like the extent we should expect and wish. Only 7,597 girls obtained the grant during the last year, and though that was a marked increase, yet

a much greater increase might have been looked for. Difficulties seem to beset the subject, and managers are easily daunted, while highly-trained teachers are apt to consider cookery as merely a waste of valuable school-time. Nevertheless, the difficulties, whatever they are, have been overcome or have vanished in some places, and one object of this paper is to show how best they may be met, provided it be once granted that such lessons are likely to be beneficial.

And first, however, we should make it clear that in proposing to give every girl who passes through an elementary school, lessons in cooking, we do not propose to give her in any sense a technical education; we are not proposing to teach a trade. Technical education may or may not have a future before it in our elementary schools, but at present it has absolutely no place there; we must let that alone, though perhaps not for ever. In teaching both sewing and cookery we are not attempting to do any more for girls than is done for boys in teaching them arithmetic and algebra; we are merely setting before us the simplest and truest end of all education, the drawing out and development of the mental powers of the children, and we are using as means to that end, as far as possible, the acquirement of those branches of knowledge which will probably be most useful in the after-life of boy or girl.

Now, while many will admit readily that cookery lessons are almost absolutely certain to be of use in the after-life of every girl, many also assert that they cannot be made to supply mental training, and therefore are not truly educational, and ought not to find a place upon the time-table. This is a complete mistake. In the hands of a competent teacher a lesson in cookery can be, and is, as truly educational as any other lesson; that is, it can be made as good a training for the mental powers, for the observation, the memory, the judgment, the reasoning powers, even the imagination and the inventive faculties. It can also be linked on to other lessons, as geography and arithmetic, at many points, and will vitalize them with what they so often lack, a real interest within the grasp of the learner; it can be made a useful piece of training for hand and eye, and altogether for that too often neglected co-partner of the mind, the body; it directly teaches carefulness, neatness, and cleanliness, and last, though most important of all, as most truly tending to develop the girl's powers and faculties, it is a link between the lessons and the life, between the school and the home, between the two existences (often completely separate) of a girl who has perhaps a wretched, destitute, ill-managed home, and who for hours every day in a beautiful school may be studying branches of knowledge of which her parents do not even know the names. Such a link does good on both sides, and further, while we do occasionally find girls in the upper standards, especially in better-class schools, looking with

contempt upon all manual or domestic labour as completely beneath them, and thinking, if not saying, that the mother who has had no education is good enough for such drudgery, but that they will have nothing to do with it, we may rest assured that there is no more certain cure for such ignorant and mischievous folly than a course of lessons in cookery. This is especially the case when those lessons are given by an educated lady, who by example more forceful than any precept sets forth the dignity of labour, and at the same time by her teaching shows how nearly all branches of the knowledge, rightly so highly valued by the girl, may be brought to bear upon the home life. Of course those cases are of most frequent occurrence in higher-grade schools where the fees are high—we believe that the London Board finds them not infrequently among the girls attending their sixpenny schools; but the contempt and dislike at first expressed generally vanish speedily, and this is one strong argument in favour of the recent alterations in the code, by which it is insisted that in the future new cookery classes opened in elementary schools must be taught by a person specially trained for the work in one or other of the training-schools of cookery open throughout the kingdom. The reason is obvious. If the girls we are speaking of are taught unscientifically by an untrained person, even the best of cooks, they will speedily detect the want of groundwork in her knowledge and the fact that her teaching is merely by rule of thumb, and instead of being in the old phrase purged of their contempt, they will probably be confirmed in the idea that such work is beneath their attention.

But if among these better-class girls we find the cookery lessons thus useful in checking and guiding mistaken aspiration and foolish estimates of the relative values of different kinds of knowledge and labour, what shall we say of their influence among the more destitute children in the poorer schools? The sparkling eyes at the mention of the lesson, the eager answers to the question, "Do you like your cooking lesson?" tell their own tale. "Better nor anything, teacher," is the frequent reply; and the further question, "Have you practised at home?" generally elicits that the enthusiasm is not confined to school, but that the lessons have been carried home and are doing their work there. "Please, teacher, I've cooked Sunday dinner three times." "Please, teacher, I've made bread." "I made father a stew and he said it was first-rate." It is quite the exception if any child has not practised at home. Neither parents nor children object to "home lessons" of this kind, and the interest, pride, and satisfaction of both parties is very pleasant to see: The poorer the school the keener the interest taken in the lessons, and the more readily is the food bought up in penny and halfpenny portions. This so far we have found to be an invariable rule, extending even down to the night ragged schools, where, in Liverpool, cooking lessons

have been given to both boys and girls, and are as highly appreciated by one as the other; indeed, if there were any difference when they came to be examined, the advantage was rather on the side of the boys. Every one of the ragged barefoot urchins, too, had, in consequence of his cooking lessons, decided on a career in life which was somehow to include cooking, such as ship's steward, ship's cook, &c. They might not be able to carry out their desires, but the very fact of having come to such a determination would go far to lift them out of the gutter and keep them from the too common and natural course of growth, from gutter lads into corner men and loafers.

And those who work among the poor where cooking lessons are given bear constant testimony to the extent of the good done. Homes reformed, proper food provided for the sick and for infants, ailing mothers helped in their heavy tasks by the increased handiness and interest of the eldest girl, even though she may be only twelve years old, or less—these are the fruits of cooking lessons properly given. Here is a case in point.

A poor woman was visited to ascertain why her little girl was not at school. The usual story. "He's been out of work eleven weeks, and they (the guardians) won't allow me her school wages 'cause I've only got one of school age, and it's so high at this board school. But I am going to send her down to Thomas's schools next week, it's only twopence there."

"She will get cooking lessons there," said the visitor.

"Yes, and that's why I want her to go there. Why, I was up last week at Mrs. Hough's; she was moving, and there—she was called out and I was a-scrubbing the bedroom for her, and when I come down just as she was a comin' in, I said to her, 'Why who's ever got tea?' 'Why, Lina, to be sure,' says she. 'Ever since she went to Thomas's schools and had them cooking lessons, she's a deal better cook nor I am, and as handy as handy. And if you'll believe me, ma'am, there was a bit of meat stewed for the father, and it did smell good, and a mackerel fried as nice as possible for us. And her mother tells me she makes a drop of nice broth for the children out of an old bone as *she'd* have flung away.'

This is literally true, and "Lina" was a young person who had reached the mature age of eleven and a half when she took her cooking lessons, and was so small that doubts were expressed whether she could possibly lift a pot.

Surely there is little need to doubt that lessons producing such fruit as this are beneficial, and we have also the testimony of many mistresses and teachers to the fact that the children return to their other lessons with renewed zest, refreshed and not wearied by the change of occupation. There is still another point, however, of direct interest to managers. In poor schools the cooking lessons are looked upon as such a treat that not only may

they be used as an inducement to regularity of attendance, but they are so highly appreciated by parents that they are frequently the means of keeping girls at school a year or half a year longer, when otherwise they would have been removed at the earliest possible moment—thus improving the child's education and increasing the general earning power of the school.

If, therefore, we may consider it is proved that lessons in cooking are at least desirable, the question follows, what are the difficulties in the way of their being established in every elementary school in the kingdom? Briefly we may say that the principal difficulties are three in number: First, the teacher; second, the time table; third, the outlay for fittings, utensils, and food; and with these we will deal in their order.

First, then, as to the teacher. There is no doubt that the recent alteration in the code has increased the difficulties of managers in dealing with this point, but we believe the step has been taken with due consideration and in the right direction with regard to keeping the quality of the teaching up to a sufficiently high standard. According to the code of 1885, each girl in the fourth standard or upwards is entitled to a grant of four shillings who has had forty hours' instruction in cookery, twenty of which at least have been spent in cooking with her own hands, in a class of not more than twenty-four scholars, on condition that the inspector reports that special and appropriate provision is made for the practical teaching of cookery, and that the teacher holds a certificate from one of the training schools of cookery.

It must be mentioned here, for it is important, that the word "certificate," as used by the Education Department, represents the word "diploma" as used by the training schools of cookery. No doubt before long this little anomaly may be removed, but the schools have been in the habit of granting certificates to those who merely took courses of lessons without going in for the full training, and nothing but a diploma certifies competency or conveys authority to teach with the sanction of the school.

Now the training-schools of cookery are, practically, South Kensington, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, and Liverpool, where, for years past, teachers have been trained for this work. We have no returns from Edinburgh, but at South Kensington, during the last nine years, 199 teachers have passed through the full training, and at Glasgow, Leeds and Liverpool, which, with some smaller schools, are united under the title of the Northern Union of Schools of Cookery, and the patronage of H.R.H. the Duchess of Albany, 120 teachers have qualified themselves. These schools—at least South Kensington and the Northern Union, are prepared to authorize past teaching, which is of good quality, though the teacher may not have been trained, by sending a visiting examiner on payment of a nominal fee and expenses, who will inspect the teaching, examine the teacher, and report to the committee.

Upon this report, if the work done is thoroughly satisfactory, a special local diploma will be granted. This, however, only applies to good past work, where the untrained teacher has been giving instruction for some years. For the future, no doubt, teachers must take the proper training if they are to satisfy the inspectors.

The forty hours of work required by the code is commonly divided into twenty lessons of two hours each, as a shorter lesson hardly allows the whole process of preparation and cooking of any dish and the necessary cleaning to be gone through. This last is done entirely by the children. The lessons in most cases are alternately demonstration and practice; at one lesson the teacher preparing and cooking before the children the dishes they themselves will cook next day, and at the same time explaining to them the nature and value of the foods and the reasons for the different processes employed, giving them, in fact, a sound scientific basis for the practical and technical knowledge they are acquiring.

In many places the school boards have engaged one or more trained teachers to give lessons constantly in their schools, and to do nothing else. But the wants of voluntary and other schools are met by teachers sent out from the training schools at a certain fee for a course of lessons. Some school boards also adopt this plan—Edinburgh for one. The fee of course varies with local arrangements, each training-school settling its own terms. In Liverpool five pounds and the teacher's expenses is the sum charged for one course of twenty lessons: but this may be proportionately reduced, to a certain extent; for though the code only permits twenty-four children to take part in a practice lesson, there is no limit upon the number present at a demonstration. If space permit, therefore, three classes may be present at one demonstration, and on subsequent days have their practice lessons, and by this arrangement three classes can have twenty lessons each for ten pounds instead of fifteen pounds.

In towns and neighbourhoods where a training-school exists, the difficulty of obtaining a duly qualified teacher is reduced to a minimum; in small towns and villages it is certainly much greater, and can only be successfully met by combination. A teacher can give at least ten lessons of two hours each in a week. If five schools in a district combine to secure her services for two lessons a week each, the expenses will be reduced to the lowest point. Moreover, if, as is often done, one school, in a central position, fits up a class room as a kitchen, and allows classes from other schools to attend there for cooking lessons, the outlay for fittings will be greatly reduced; and by the arrangement of demonstration and practice lessons, already indicated, more than five schools can obtain the benefit of the teacher's services. This is easily enough managed in towns where the children from other schools have no great distance to come; in villages, unless under exceptional cir-

cumstances, it would generally be better for the teacher to visit each school. The teacher would then reside in the neighbourhood for ten weeks, and in that time give a full course of lessons to five schools at least.

The second great difficulty to which we referred is the time-table. In Edinburgh, where we are told the education of girls in elementary schools is carried farther than in England, the school board does not work for the grant, and a course of lessons consists only of twenty-four hours. But in the opinion of most persons who have looked into the question practically, forty hours is none too much, and more, not less is desirable, while certainly there are few schools, board or otherwise, which can afford to despise or forego a grant of four shillings a head. Under the Liverpool Board a lesson lasts only one and a half hours, but a course consists of sixty hours, while in the voluntary and other schools the lessons are given exactly as required by the code, with this important exception, that the Liverpool school of cookery, in common with some other training-schools, sets its face against practice-classes more than fifteen in number, considering that number as the outside to which a teacher can really attend while they are actually at work. Both under the board and in the voluntary schools time is now, as a rule, willingly found by the teachers for these lessons, and most usually it is done by omitting higher arithmetic. Any one who has much knowledge of girls, either in town or country, will know how commonly knowledge of that particular branch of education seems to be gained and lost without leaving any apparent traces on the mind, and how, often, a month or two after leaving school, a girl will prove herself absolutely ignorant of the methods pursued in doing the very problems which she herself worked successfully before the inspector. It seems to take no root in their minds, and we may let it go unregretted, when we can substitute for it that which is so immediately and practically valuable to them as instruction in cookery.

And so we reach our last and greatest difficulty—the necessary outlay. This is a difficulty we must frankly admit, but we must assert also that its magnitude has been exaggerated, both by the ideas of persons who have never looked into the matter, and also by the action of some school boards, who have made their class-kitchens absolutely perfect, and in doing so have incurred a great deal of unnecessary expense. As a matter of fact, the primary outlay for utensils, fittings, &c., need not amount to any very large sum. The utensils required for a class of twelve or fifteen girls can be purchased for a trifle under five pounds. An ordinary class-room will serve as kitchen, and boards laid upon trestles, or even along the backs of two benches, make satisfactory tables and are easily cleared away. It is desirable if possible to have a fireplace of some kind, but if that is not to be had a portable gas stove will do all that is required. If the school is to be a centre,

or if classes are to be carried on all the school year, it is advisable that the stove should be bought. It will cost about three and a half to four guineas ; if not purchased it may be hired. In Manchester and other places gas stoves are let out on hire for merely nominal sums—one shilling a quarter and upwards. In country villages gas is not always attainable, but an oil stove will answer ; or, better still, a cottage kitchen near at hand, with its fireplace and oven, such as the children will find in their own homes, can often be hired for a trifle. To prevent mistakes, however, we may mention here that it has never been found that because a girl had learnt to cook on a gas stove she found any difficulty in cooking on an open fire at home.

Ten pounds will thus, we see, more than cover the primary expenses, which will not recur, even when the stove is to be permanent. The recurring expenses are the teachers' fees and the cost of food. For one course of twenty lessons the food will cost about one pound seventeen shillings, but this is almost always recouped by the sale of the food in small portions at cost price, and sometimes a profit is made. The teacher's fee is almost covered by the grant in a class of twenty-four, but if the managers wisely elect to have smaller classes for the sake of getting more satisfactory results, they can even then cover the fee, either by making a small extra charge to the children for the lessons—say one penny a lesson—or by admitting mothers and friends to be present at the demonstration lessons and making a small charge.

When school managers are really anxious to take up this subject, they will soon find that their path has been cleared, and that such difficulties as remain will be easily overcome ; and even poor schools, where the outlay is a great consideration, will find supporters of educational movements ready to help, once they see the good that can be and is being done. In Liverpool, for instance, the Council of Education makes grants to poor schools in order to start the classes.

There are one or two points still remaining to which we would draw the special attention of school managers who are anxious that the children should obtain all possible benefit from the classes.

First, the food cooked and all its adjuncts must be carefully suited to the needs of the children ; and the modes of preparation taught and the directions given must be such as they can apply in their own homes. For instance, it is a mistake in giving lessons to very poor children to direct them to use bought sauces for flavouring, or to teach that vegetables for a vegetable soup must be fried in butter. Yet we have heard both these directions given to a class of children from a penny school.

Secondly, it is desirable that the children should have printed recipes, and not that they should spend a large portion of the

time in laboriously writing out the teacher's instructions from dictation instead of attentively watching her proceedings.

Thirdly, it is desirable that cookery should be treated as an elementary science subject. Unless it is so handled it speedily degenerates, the directions given become mere rules of thumb, and the children do not acquire that scientific basis for their knowledge which at once elucidates the knowledge given, furnishes a guide for action under differing circumstances, and fixes the whole in the memory. It is for this reason that the proper training of teachers is so much insisted on. Cases are not unknown where children have learnt cookery from a cook in a kitchen, and domestic economy from a book in school, and the two lessons have never been brought to bear upon each other or in any way linked together in the children's minds.

Lastly, if the work done is to be thorough, and if any general test of efficiency is to be applied at all, it is most desirable that qualified female inspectors should be appointed or acknowledged by Government—one, let us say, to each senior inspector's division—to visit the schools where classes are going on, to inspect the work, to encourage the teachers, and to examine the children.

A. C. M.

ANOTHER MORNING IN FLORENCE.

(DEDICATED TO MR. RUSKIN.)

A DULL grey morning. Melissa, looking out from the tall old house opposite the Pitti Palace, sees damp pavements, damp roofs, and a forest of damp green umbrellas rising up from the cabs on the cabstand opposite. "It is positively too dark for Santa Croce. Ruskin says we must have sunlight," cries Melissa, in her most pessimistic tones.

Hannamoria, the scribe and optimist, comes to the rescue. "Santa Croce won't run away; meanwhile, let us go to Santa Maria Novella, and look at Giotto's St. Anna."

"Very well. Let us start at once."

"I confess I tremble," says Hannamoria, who loves her jest. "What is it your Ruskin says of the St. Anna? 'If you can be pleased with this, you can see Florence; but if not, you can never see it.' Are you prepared to go home if you don't like it?"

"You may laugh at Ruskin," answers Melissa, as she puts on her hat and tucks the precious volume under her arm; "you may laugh at Giotto, if you like. There is nothing to prevent you from laughing at Raphael. I wonder that you don't."

"Your knowledge of the relation of cause and effect seems imperfect," is the Sphinx-like reply, as they go down the stone stairs into the street.

The rain has ceased, and the clouds are lifting, but the Arno flows dull and turgid as they cross the bridge to the Via Tornabuoni—that terribly sophisticated thoroughfare, with its cosmopolitan shops and polyglot shopmen. Melissa forgets her artistic enthusiasm, and lingers at every step; now at a jeweller's, now at a photographer's, now at a tempting old book-stall. A splendid officer goes by, his soft blue cloak falling in statuesque folds about him. "Only an Italian can wear a cloak. What a beautiful people it is," she cries.

From the street corner comes a whiff of violets. Flowers lie exposed for sale on the ledge of a tall grey building—anemones, violets, scarlet Florentine lilies—a mass of delicate colour against the gloom. Melissa stops to buy, and is thoroughly cheated by the dark-eyed graceful salesman, who looks as if he had stepped out of a picture at the Uffizi or Pitti.

Santa Maria Novella is reached at last. They pause a moment to examine the façade, then make their way into the great old

building. Melissa immediately opens her copy of "Mornings in Florence."

"We are to 'walk straight up the church,'" she announces in a loud whisper, "'and go in behind the great marble altar.'"

It is dark behind the altar, and Hannamoria, who is myopic, complains that she cannot see the frescoes, Ghirlandagio's "farrago of tweedledum and tweedledee."

"It doesn't matter much," says Melissa Consolatrix; "we are only to look at them because they are rather vulgar and make a good contrast to the Giottos. Now we must ask the sacristan to take us into the Green Cloisters; at least *you* must, for my knowledge of the *lingua Toscana* will not carry me so far."

There is no sacristan visible; but Melissa describes a man engaged with a broom, whom Hannamoria and the polyglot addresses in very choice Italian, to quote her own words and Hamlet's.

Chiostro verde? Yes, he has the key. Will the ladies step through this doorway? He will send the *custode* to them at once.

The great door shuts behind them with a sound that calls forth a perfect orchestra of echoes. The rain has begun to fall, and pours steadily on to the grass-plat, with its central solitary tomb of grey marble; the arching cloisters look dreary enough, with their mouldering frescoes and pavement of tombstones. There is an arched aperture in the wall, big and dark, through which the vaults below can be dimly discerned. "I don't like this place," says Melissa in a low voice, and creeps under the ample wing of her friend.

"We must turn off into this little passage on the right," Hannamoria observes, in her most matter-of-fact tones, "and 'ask for the tomb of the Marchesa Stiozzi Ridolfi.'"

"There is no one to ask," comes the faint response. "I wonder why the *custode* has not come."

"It is much more pleasant without him," Hannamoria answers, as they turn into the gloomy little arcade which branches off from the main cloister; "the frescoes are behind the tomb, in the recess, Ruskin says."

"Look!" cries Melissa, stopping suddenly, and turning pale.

At the furthest end of the passage looms a tall figure, draped, and gleaming very white in the darkness. Motionless it stands, one arm uplifted to the vaulted roof above.

Hannamoria peering through her eyeglass grows a shade less courageous than before.

"It is one of those white monks one sees at funerals," Melissa says as they advance a step or two. "No; it is only a statue, but it is sufficiently ghastly."

"It *is* ghastly," confesses her companion.

A door opens suddenly in an unexpected place; a veritable monk passes across the cloister and disappears behind another door, equally unexpected; he waves the ladies aside and says

something unintelligible as he goes. The mysterious black and white presence seems to belong as little to the world outside as the sculptured effigies on the marble tombs.

The Ridolfi tomb is discovered at last, and behind it, sure enough, are the famous Giottos—St. Anne in her brown and white bed, St. Joachim at the Golden Gate. Melissa whips out Ruskin again, and vibrates between page and picture as she looks at Giotto alternately with her own eyes and her author's.

Presently, up comes a huge black cat and begins to mew piteously.

"Horrid thing!" cries Melissa with a shudder. The faithful Hannamoria chases it with her umbrella, and it flies to a little desolate patch of grass and shrubs opposite, into which the rain is pouring steadily.

"I wish the *custode* would come," repeats Melissa uneasily. "This is such a horrid place one can't really enjoy the pictures."

"And the light is so bad," laments the myopic one, "it is no good trying to see them properly."

"I think I understand a little what Ruskin means about Giotto, though, don't you?"

"Yes, a little. I think we have seen all we want to."

"Yes; we can always come again."

They emerge into the main square of the cloisters. The rain is falling in torrents on to the grass-plat; every now and then comes an echoing splash as a water-pipe sends an unusually big torrent into the court.

Melissa runs up the steps to the door and fumbles with the latch.

"It is locked!" she says, and turns a little pale.

"Of course it is," Hannamoria answers stoutly; "if we knock the man will come and let us out." She applies her knuckles to the panel, but there is no response.

"Louder, louder," urges Melissa; "they will never hear us through this noisy rain."

Five minutes of fruitless knocking; the great oaken door never so much as shakes.

"Oh!" cries Melissa tremulous, "what shall we do?"

"Do?" says her friend, "why, try the door that the monk came through, of course."

A return to the little cloister of the tombs. More knocking at an unimpressionable door; the door opposite is also tried and found locked. Melissa's terrors are growing every minute. At last she sinks down in despair on a flight of steps and buries her face in her handkerchief.

"We shall never get out of this place, Hannamoria, never!"

"What nonsense."

"That man locked us in for the purpose. I see it now."

"Absurd. What motive could he possibly have had?"

"I can't pretend to your charming simplicity. You know what Italians are."

Drip, drip, splash, splash, goes the rain. Miaw, miaw, the great black cat has come near again and lingers about them. He has brought a comrade, a white cat, as swollen and bloated as himself, who peers up at our prisoners with inquisitive countenance. All the doors have been tried and found wanting; that is to say, all are hopelessly shut fast.

Melissa has left off lamenting and sits in stony despair near the main door, which she has ceased to belabour with her umbrella. Hannamoria maintains an iron front, but she does not enjoy the situation. A distant clock strikes two.

"We have been here just two hours," says Melissa in a low voice.

Opposite, above the arcade of the cloister, rise irregular red roofs, and a white plaster wall set with little windows. There is a hopelessly empty and deserted look about it all, but the sight of it causes Melissa's spirits to rise.

"Hannamoria," she says, "I have an idea. We might climb those water-pipes to the roofs and then signal for help outside."

Her friend answers not; why shall she dash this last hope to the ground? She knows that they both shrink at stiles and are hopelessly "stumped" by a five-barred gate, but why mention it?

"Yes," she answers vaguely. "I suppose it is the street outside, I hear sounds of various kinds. If only that door there leading to it were open."

"Hannamoria!"

"Yes."

"That door that you were speaking about—see."

"Well?"

"It has a fan-light—and the fan-light is broken."

"Yes, but it is hopelessly out of reach, and the hope is small."

"There are some chairs in the cloister; you shall stand on one and hold me up, and I will put my head through the fan-light and scream."

"We can *try*, certainly."

But alas, Hannamoria can no more stand on a rickety chair and hold up her friend than she can fly.

"Oh!" cried Melissa, wringing her hands and pacing up and down, "what shall we do? What shall we do? Think of it—in a few hours it will begin to get dark, here in this place, among these tombs, and they are modern tombs!"

"I don't see that that makes it any worse," says poor Hannamoria, at her wits' end.

"Indeed it does," Melissa cries, argumentative in the midst of her woe and panic; "a modern tomb is an infinitely ghastlier object than an ancient one. And those eats! And that figure!"

Meantime an idea seems to have struck Hannamoria. She has

drawn out her handkerchief, and is engaged in tying it on to the handle of her umbrella. In another moment she has remounted the chair and the handkerchief is waving feebly from the fan-light.

"Scream!" urges Melissa. "Yell at the top of your voice."

Hannamoria lifts up her voice, not very heartily, then suddenly is silent.

"The handkerchief has dropped off!"

"Never mind," cries Melissa, seizing the umbrella and tying on her own handkerchief, "let me come." She leaps to the chair, which rocks wildly, pokes the umbrella through the aperture, and gives vent to a prolonged and polyglot wail of anguish: "Help! Aux secours! Inglese!"

For some time her efforts are vain, then a sound of a voice speaking an unintelligible tongue is heard on the other side of the door.

"Inglese, Inglese!" shrieks Melissa, waving more zealously than ever.

Then the voice dies away. Melissa dismounts broken-hearted.

"Some one has come and gone away again."

"Perhaps they will come back with a key."

"No," says poor Melissa, "we are locked in here on purpose. Oh! Hannamoria, can't you understand?"

She strides off along the cloister, leaving her friend by the empty chair. "There is nothing," she thinks, "with which one could kill oneself if the worst came to the worst."

"Melissa!" It is Hannamoria's voice that floats across to her, And what is that that she sees! Is it possible? The great door is bursting asunder, the fissure widens, and outside in broad daylight stands their faithless friend of the broom, grinning all over his handsome face.

But where, he asks, is the *custode*? He had sent him to the ladies immediately. The base man had failed to go.

Well, it did not matter now who had played them false, sacristan or janitor. They fee him joyfully, regardless of deserts, and walk across the piazza with a sense of freedom known only to those who have not always been free.

"Oh! those tombs, I shall never forget them," Melissa says.

"I am very hungry," Hannamoria answers calmly. "I wonder what the *trattoria* man has brought us for dinner."

"It was all Ruskin's fault," Melissa observes irrelevantly.

AN APRIL DAY IN SURREY.

I.

How long ago, my dear ?
Nay, never twenty year,
Since two simpletons went strolling on the breezy down,
 While the sun shone on the chalk
 Beneath a woodland walk
Where the lad and girl were trampling o'er the beech-nuts brown !
 'Twas you and I, my dear,
 Though now 'tis twenty year
Since the blue-bells rang to greet us in our young love's prime ;
 And the white anemones,
 Soft bowing with the breeze,
Whispered of us to the primroses in rhythmic chime.
 'Twas then we both confessed,
 For blissfulness and rest
There's nothing in the wide world can be half so fine,
 As a nut-strewn woodland walk
 Above the dazzling chalk,
On an April day in Surrey if the sun but shine !

II.

How long ago, my dear ?
Ah, yes ! 'Tis twenty year.
There's a little touch of frost, my love, on both our sobered heads !
 But after grievous pain,
 To-day we're young again
Among the pale anemones and primrose beds.
 And, oh, my own sweetheart,
 I've a secret to impart,
I could not tell you elsewhere if 'twere to save my life !
 My darling, it is this :
 By your first maiden kiss
You've grown dearer—dearer—dearest—every hour you've been
 my wife !
 So we, a wedded pair,
 Will ever more declare
There's nothing in this wide world can be half so fine,
 As a nut-strewn woodland walk,
 Above the dazzling chalk,
On an April day in Surrey if the sun but shine !

EXPRESS!

A RAILWAY ROMANCE IN ONE COMPARTMENT.

By JOHN MADDISON MORTON, Author of "Box and Cox," &c.

CHARACTERS.

A LADY.

A GENTLEMAN.

A RAILWAY GUARD.

The action is supposed to take place in a first-class railway carriage, travelling on a certain line between a certain place and another certain place.

SCENE.—*A plain interior supposed to represent a compartment in a first-class railway carriage—door in flat at c.—the entrance—four easy chairs placed two and two opposite the others, representing the seats—on the second chair at l. h. an open newspaper.*

The actor playing the part of the gentleman enters at door c. in light overcoat, with travelling bag, hatbox, and railway rug over his arm; he places the bag, hatbox, and rug on first chair, l. h., and advances, cap in hand, and, after sundry bows, proceeds to explain the scene to the audience.—Ladies and Gentlemen,—the little piece we are about to present to you is supposed to take place in a first-class compartment of a railway carriage, travelling express from—from—Plymouth to London; shall we say Plymouth to London?—very well—Plymouth to London. You will also be good enough to see in the humble individual who is now addressing you, a deputy-assistant-deputy-inspector of Government prisons, returning from an official visit to that well-known and, judging from the constant stream of applications for admission, highly popular convict establishment at—at—Dartmouth? shall we say Dartmouth? be it so, we'll say Dartmouth! Our first idea, in order to impart a greater reality to the situation, was to place before you a regular train with locomotive, &c., &c., all complete; and for this purpose we applied to a certain railway company for the loan of one; but the secretary, in reply, said that the only materials he could offer us were cattle trucks and coal wagons, all the passenger rolling stock being in requisition, owing to the unusual number they had smashed up during the year.

He certainly offered us the use of an engine, but at the same time candidly gave us to understand that it was a little bit rusty, and wouldn't stand the slightest pressure ; he further added that if the knob of the steam-whistle *should* happen to knock out the front teeth of any of the audience, we were not to blame *him* if we had a few compensation actions to sustain !—and so on ! Altogether the alternative was so dismal that we decided on sacrificing a flaming line in our playbill about "Flashing express," "Real steam," "Genuine foot-warmers," which we had composed for the occasion, and to fall back upon the best scene that our stage-carpenter and property-man could prepare for us.

We must, therefore, ask you to bring your imaginations to our aid, and to fancy you see in that door and in these four easy chairs the interior of a first-class compartment of a railway carriage, and to imagine further that I have passed the night in one of them, and am at the present moment still enjoying a profound sleep.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, permit me to enter into my part, to seat myself in the snuggest corner I can find, and to resume my interrupted nap ! (*makes a profound bow to audience, goes up stage, and seats himself on the first chair, l. H., puts on his travelling cap, wraps himself up in the railway rug after having placed on the second chair, l., his travelling bag, a railway guide, and a paper knife ; he then yawns once or twice, then falls asleep, and after a time snores gently. Loud noise of train arriving, with steam engine, railway bell, and whistle, as the train is supposed to arrive and gradually to stop.*)

GUARD (*heard without*). Reading ! Change here for Guildford, Dorking, Reigate, Redhill !

VOICE (*without*). Guard, how long do we stop here ?

GUARD (*without*). Ten minutes, sir ! (*Cries of "Reading; change here," &c., &c., &c., repeated, and gradually diminishing, accompanied by noise of slamming doors, &c."*)

GENTLEMAN (*starting from his sleep*). What's that ? Who speaks of stopping ? I wonder what the time is ? (*looks at watch*). Seven o'clock ? (*opens door and looks out*). Broad daylight, I declare (*closing door again*) ; then I must have slept the best part of the night ! I don't even remember my travelling companion getting out ; he seems to have forgotten his newspaper. (*taking up paper from chair*). Not a very talkative fellow—in fact, he never opened his mouth, except to put something into it —principally Abernethies and peppermint drops. By jove, his *Daily News* is full of crumbs and carraways now ! a regular pantry !

GUARD (*again heard without*). Reading ! ten minutes to stop !

GENTLEMAN. Ten minutes to stop ? then I may as well get out and stretch my legs a bit (*rises, puts railway rug, guide, and*

travelling bag on his seat, and goes to door c.); then calls: Guard! whereabouts is the refreshment bar?

GUARD (*without*). This way, sir (*Gentleman goes out at door c. towards R. H.—short pause*).

The Lady looks in at c. and stops, then enters with two small parcels and a bonnet-box.

LADY. Yes; all things considered I decidedly prefer this carriage to the ladies' compartment, where there's only room for one, and then what should I do with my packages? Besides, ladies are not so *remarkably* agreeable among themselves; whilst here—(*looking about her*)—let me see, which corner shall I take? I think this will do (*indicating the seat which the Gentleman has just left*); one's face to the engine, and not so likely to be troubled by people getting in and out; yes, this will do very well indeed! (*during this she removes the Gentleman's effects from first chair L. H. to the opposite chair at R.*); and after all, provided one has a gentleman for a travelling companion, a host of these little difficulties soon disappear! (*sits herself on first chair L. H.*). There! I shall do very nicely here—very nicely indeed! (*here the Gentleman appears outside at door c.*). Some one's coming! one of the opposite sex! I hope a gentleman,—suppose I pretend to be asleep? I will! I'll shut my eyes, and then I shall be able to judge of his appearance! (*wraps herself up so as to conceal her face, and pretends to be asleep*).

GENTLEMAN (*entering at door and stamping his feet*). I feel all the better! thanks to a glass of sherry and half a dozen rapid turns up and down the platform, the circulation is re-established, so now for another dose of pins and needles. Halloa! what's this? my seat taken and all my things bundled away anyhow on another seat! Well, of all the cool proceedings—(*to the Lady*). I beg pardon, madam, but—asleep? Rather a sudden attack of drowsiness considering she can't have been here more than five minutes! However, she's a lady—at least she looks like one, though she is such a cool hand, and I can't be so ungallant as to turn her out, especially as she looks so snug and comfortable! I must take another corner! (*he seats himself on second chair at L. H., partly turning his back to the Lady*).

LADY (*aside and partly uncovering her face*). I knew these little difficulties would soon arrange themselves! (*wraps herself up as before*).

GENTLEMAN (*fidgeting about in his seat*). I was much more comfortable in my own seat. There was a nice hollow for one's back there; but here there's a confounded lump that's positively painful! I must confess I have found that women in general haven't the slightest hesitation in taking advantage of one if they possibly can; here's an instance; just as I had got used to my seat, in comes one of the weaker sex and turns me out bag and baggage! They know their power and abuse it; too bad! Now

(*looking aside at Lady*) if my neighbour were but young—and pretty into the bargain—but no; catch a woman wrapping herself up like that when she *is* young (*gaping*) and pretty! (*his head nods once or twice and he falls asleep*).

GUARD (*without*). Take your seats! Any more going on?

LADY (*cautiously peeping at Gentleman, then uncovering and aside*). So it seems I shall have no other travelling companion but this gentleman! (*here loud railway whistle heard, and noise of train starting*). We're off (*looking at Gentleman again*). I must say he appears to be perfectly harmless and inoffensive. (*Gentleman snores*). What did he say? (*a louder snore from Gentleman*). Well, if that's a specimen of his conversation, it isn't likely to compromise one! (*another snore*). I may as well go to sleep myself, and then perhaps I may be able to join in the conversation too! (*wraps herself up, but this time allows her face to remain uncovered; closes her eyes; pause*).

GENTLEMAN (*suddenly waking and shifting his position*). Decidedly, of all the uncomfortable seats this is the most uncomfortable. I *should* like to know what they stuff their cushions with, I feel as if I'd got a quartern loaf at my back! (*taking a rapid glance at Lady, then in a savage tone*). She seems comfortable enough! How absurd—how ridiculous of me not to have demanded—not to have in-sis-ted (*looking again at Lady*). By Jove, she *is* young! and by no means bad-looking! Bad-looking! she's pretty—*very* pretty—excessively pretty! and to think I should have actually gone to sleep in her presence! One never knows what one does in one's sleep, luckily, I never snore; that's one comfort! (*takes off his travelling cap, arranges his hair, cravat, &c.*). How soundly she sleeps—if she *does* sleep! (*in doubt*). When one is *really* asleep—I mean *fast* asleep—it isn't usual to wear a smile on one's face; on the contrary, one's face generally gets ugly! I'll be bound that just now I was positively hideous! (*he coughs loudly, the Lady moves*). She wakes! (*suddenly and loudly*). What a beautiful country! what a lovely green on those meadows! (*Lady keeps silence*). I'll try again! (*still louder*). How unusually beautiful are the autumn tints, especially so early in the spring! (*pause; aside*). No response? She must have taken a sleeping draught!

LADY (*pretending to wake*). A thousand pardons, sir; did you speak?

GENTLEMAN. I was merely observing what a lovely meadow on those greens! I mean—(*another pause*)—I hear the harvest is likely to be a plentiful one, although I'm told that turnips are backward, I haven't heard anything about carrots.

LADY (*in an indifferent tone*). I beg pardon; were you speaking to me? (*Aside*). Some gentleman farmer, evidently.

GENTLEMAN (*netted and imitating her—aside*). "Were you speaking to me?" I rather think I *was* speaking to her!

Halloo! she's off to sleep again! No one can call *her* particularly wide awake—well, since she's off into land of dreams again I don't see why I shouldn't indulge in a cigarette (*takes out some cigarette papers, tobacco pouch, spreads them on his knees and proceeds to make a cigarette; then stops*). Stop, though! I can't smoke without first asking her permission; of course not! (*A loud and coughing*). Ahem! (*watching her*). Sound as a top! Try again! (*coughing louder*). Ahem! (*the Lady opens her eyes and moves impatiently,—aside*). That did it!

GENTLEMAN (*apologetically*). My cough is rather troublesome, ma'am.

LADY. I find it so—very!

GENTLEMAN (*aside*). Well! that's about the rudest thing I've heard for some time! (*Aloud*). I was about to ask you whether you object to the smell of tobacco?

LADY. Oh, not at all, sir!

GENTLEMAN. Thank you! (*proceeds to make his cigarette and about to light it*).

LADY. I mean, not till it's lighted!

GENTLEMAN. Oh, I see; and then you do?

LADY. Very much indeed!

GENTLEMAN. Even when you are asleep? (*in an insinuating tone*).

LADY (*slowly and decisively*). Whether I am awake or asleep, sir!

GENTLEMAN (*aside*). Now that's what I call selfish—just as if the smoke could get up her nose when her eyes are shut! (*putting away his smoking apparatus. Aside*). I must say I have met more agreeable young ladies—*very much* more agreeable—in fact, I may say I never remember meeting one *less* agreeable—Well, I shan't disturb the "Sleeping Beauty" again in a hurry. Now for another nap! (*sulkily crams smoking apparatus into his pocket, draws his cap very much over his head, stands up, folds himself up in his rug, and then flounces down on his seat again, partially turning his back to the Lady*).

LADY (*slowly turning her head and taking a glance at Gentleman*). Well! I must confess he put away his smoking apparatus with a very good grace! (*sees newspaper*). Some one has left a newspaper! (*taking newspaper and reading*). Um, um! *Plymouth Gazette*. "Foreign News," "Paris Fashions," "Early Strawberries." What's this? "Escape of a convict. We learn that Benjamin Burkshaw, a criminal of the most desperate character, effected his escape from Dartmoor prison yesterday. The following is his description: Age, not exactly known; eyes, nothing peculiar; wears a long black beard—has probably cut it off; walks slightly lame with one leg, uncertain which; supposed to have directed his steps towards London, or in some other direction." Dear me! it is just possible he may be in this very train! (*looking aside at the Gentleman, then reading again*). "Middle

height" (*looking again at Gentleman*); "inclined to be stout" (*another look at Gentleman*); he's so rolled up in his rug one can't judge! (*reads again*), "slightly bald, with a scar on left side of forehead" (*here the Gentleman in his sleep hastily pulls his travelling cap over his forehead; the Lady gives a sudden start and recoils as far as possible from the Gentleman*). How very suddenly he pulled his cap over his forehead—and the left side of it too! Pshaw! how foolish, how absurd of me! (*reads paper again, and then closes her eyes once more*).

GENTLEMAN (*rousing himself*). It's no use! I can't get a wink of sleep, except by fits and starts—principally starts! (*Looking at Lady*). Still asleep! and no book to read except this "Illustrated Guide through England and Wales." However, *that's* better than "Bradshaw" (*during above he has taken a book out of his bag and cuts the leaves with a paper knife; turns over leaves*). What's this? (*reads*). "Guildford, county town of Surrey. It was in the neighbourhood of this ancient and picturesque town that the famous Dick Turpin—" (*here the Lady and Gentleman are suddenly thrown forward*).

LADY (*alarmed*). What a shock! Has anything happened?

GENTLEMAN (*indifferently*). Nothing of consequence! merely the train passing over something—or somebody!

LADY (*aside*). Rather an unfeeling remark! (*aloud*). Can you tell me where we are, sir? I am quite a stranger to this line.

GENTLEMAN. We *should* be near Guildford. You may not be aware, madam, that it was here that—(*taking a peep aside at his book*)—"that the famous Dick Turpin"—you've heard of Dick Turpin, of course—the celebrated highwayman? (*Lady shakes her head*). Well, it was here that he was in the habit of spending his leisure hours—I mean when he'd nothing better to do—in—in (*taking another peep at book*)—"in planting potatoes!"—Poor Dick! my grandfather saw him hanged!

LADY (*shocked*). Hanged?

GENTLEMAN. Yes—I forget exactly what for—something about putting an old lady on the kitchen fire!

LADY (*indignantly*). Surely, never was a fate more richly deserved!

GENTLEMAN. On the contrary; she was quite a respectable sort of old body!

LADY (*aloud and in a satirical tone*). Thanks, sir, for your kind and interesting information!

GENTLEMAN (*modestly*). Don't mention it, I beg!

LADY (*aside*). A newspaper correspondent, perhaps! I prefer that to a farmer!

GENTLEMAN (*after a short pause*). I find the sun rather too warm on this side of the carriage, madam—will it inconvenience you if I take this seat? (*indicating first chair at R.*).

LADY. Not in the least! Indeed, I should have the less right

to object, as I am afraid I have appropriated *yours*; and by far the more comfortable one, I suspect!

GENTLEMAN. You simply foresaw that I should offer it to you, madam!

LADY. Oh, sir! (*bowing*).

GENTLEMAN. Oh, madam! (*bowing*; he removes things from where the Lady had placed them, and seats himself opposite to her).

LADY (*aside*). Really a very pleasant, agreeable fellow!

GENTLEMAN (*aside*). Her full face is even better than her profile! (*aloud and in a sentimental tone*). Ah, madam, would it were in my power to prolong this pleasant journey—this delightful tête-à-tête!

LADY (*with dignity*). Sir!

GENTLEMAN (*aside*). That's no go! (*aloud*). I mean, madam, that one seems to travel too fast nowadays! (*Lady expresses surprise*). In fact, we're all too fast!

LADY (*severely*). Sir!

GENTLEMAN (*aside*). That's no go! (*aloud*). We've only to contrast the present with the time when the wife of one of our ancient kings traversed the whole of England by easy stages of five miles a day!

LADY. Of whom do you speak?

GENTLEMAN. Of—of—(*aside*) hang me if I know—(*aloud*) of Tabitha—I mean Elgitha, the wife of—Edmund—Sobersides—I should say Ironsides! But without going quite so far back, madam, I confess I often regret the days of those heavy old stage coaches called “High-flyers,” “Eclipses,” and “Rockets.”

LADY (*smiling*). Because they went so slowly?

GENTLEMAN. Precisely. Still, it had its advantages—it gave one an opportunity to make the acquaintance of one's travelling companions—to establish a friendly feeling—perhaps one of a more tender nature! (*with a tender look at the Lady*).

LADY (*with a stare of astonishment*). Sir!

GENTLEMAN (*aside*). It's no use. I won't try any more! (*aloud and in a more colloquial tone*). Besides, in a stage coach there was always the chance of one of those little adventures that so often happened on the road!

LADY. You mean attacks by highwaymen, such as your friend Mr.—Turpin—who had a weakness for putting respectable old ladies on the kitchen fire? (*smiling satirically—then, changing her tone*) I remember myself a certain event which happened some five or six years ago when we were travelling.

GENTLEMAN. We? you and your pa and ma, probably?

LADY. My husband and I!

GENTLEMAN. Husband? you are married, ma'am! actually, positively married?

LADY. Alas, sir! (*sighing*).

GENTLEMAN (*aside*). I see ! an unhappy union !—an ill-assorted match—poor soul ! (*aloud*). Ah, madam, you are not the only one of your too confiding sex who have found marriage a bed of roses—I mean, of nettles, instead of one of nettles—I mean roses !

LADY. But, sir—you mistake—alas, sir, I am a widow !

GENTLEMAN. A widow ? I'm delighted to hear it ! No, I'm not ! of course not ! I deeply sympathize with you—as I always do with widows—I know what it is myself. But you mustn't give way—you'll get used to it in time—like the eels—no, not like the eels—but you were about to mention some adventure which happened to you while travelling with—the late lamented—

(*Noise heard of train gradually stopping—engine, railway bell, whistle, &c., &c.*)

VOICE (*outside, gradually approaching*). “ Guildford ! Guildford ! change for Weybridge, Chertsey, Virginia Water ; all tickets ready.”

GENTLEMAN (*angrily*). All tickets ready ! these railway companies are perfectly absurd with their mania for examining tickets ! (*feeling in his pocket*).

LADY (*smiling*). Another advantage of the good old coaching days !

GENTLEMAN. Yes, quite so ! (*feeling again in his pockets one after the other*). Ah ! here it is—no, it isn't—how very odd ; now I've got it—no, I haven't ! (*diving in his pockets again*).

LADY. I'm afraid you've lost your ticket, sir.

GENTLEMAN. Oh no ! I haven't *lost* it—only I can't find it !

LADY. You may have dropped it ? (*looking about on floor*).

GENTLEMAN. Pray don't trouble yourself ; I shall be sure to find it (*aside*) as soon as I've paid for another ! (*Aloud*). I'll just speak to the station-master. Excuse me a moment ? (*LADY bows*, Gentleman exit at c., and disappears towards L.H.)

LADY. Poor fellow ! no wonder he dislikes railways if he's in the habit of losing his ticket every time he travels !

GUARD appears at door c.

GUARD (*to Lady*). Ticket, please, ma'am ? (*takes ticket and returns it to Lady*). Thank you, ma'am. (*Seeing the Gentleman's bag &c. &c. on seat*.) These things belong to you, ma'am ?

LADY. Oh no !

GUARD. Has any one left this carriage ?

LADY. Yes ! a gentleman—not a minute ago.

GUARD (*sulkily*). How can I examine people's tickets when they get out at every station ?

LADY. He fancies he has lost his ticket.

GUARD (*suspiciously*). Lost his ticket ?—what a pity ! (*Aside*).

That's an old dodge! (*Aloud*). Is the gentleman one of your party, ma'am?

LADY. Oh dear no! only so far as we are journeying in the same compartment.

GUARD (*examining the Gentleman's bag*). No name on his travelling bag—that's queer! We're expected to keep both eyes open on this line, ma'am—only yesterday we nabbed a desperate bank forger at this very station; and that *oudacious chap* Burkshaw is still at large!

LADY (*aside*). Not a very cheerful subject of conversation—I'm really getting quite nervous! (*collecting her packages and rising*).

GUARD. Going to get out, ma'am?

LADY. Yes, I should prefer the ladies' compartment.

GUARD. No room there, ma'am, eight of 'em already, besides babies!

LADY. I may get into another carriage, I presume?

GUARD. Certainly, ma'am. Good-day, ma'am (*goes out at door*).

LADY. Stop! stop! Help me out! Guard! guard! (*calling*).

GUARD (*outside*). Can't stop now, ma'am. Train just going on.

LADY. This is really too bad! Can't even change carriages on this line, which seems to be especially patronized by the criminal classes! But pshaw! I'm alarming myself unnecessarily—is it likely that this gentleman—and he *is* a gentleman—who seems to be on intimate terms with the wife of Edmund Ironsides—can possibly have any connection with—how absurd of me! I really ought to be ashamed of myself (*seeing the paper-knife which the gentleman has left on seat*). What a strange-looking paper-knife—quite a formidable weapon! *Is it a paper-knife? it looks more like a stiletto!* (*taking up paper-knife very carefully between her finger and thumb, and then quickly dropping it again*). Such an instrument as that was never made to cut leaves! It looks much adapted to—(*shuddering*). How ridiculous of me! My silly fears are running away with me again. Ha, ha, ha! (*forcing a laugh*).

GUARD (*without*). Take your seats!

GENTLEMAN *hurries in at c. The Lady suddenly stops laughing and gets as far as she can into her corner.*

GENTLEMAN. I've found my ticket! I knew I should the moment I bought another (*takes his seat—to the Lady*). Where do you suppose it was?—you'll never guess. In my purse, where I always put my tickets! Ha, ha, ha!

LADY (*aside*). He had a ticket, then?

GENTLEMAN. It is very kind of you to interest yourself in the misfortunes of a stranger (*bowing*).

LADY. Is it not natural?

GENTLEMAN. It seems to be so to *you*, madam (*bowing again and moving a little towards Lady—who retreats*).

LADY (*aside*). If I could only induce him to remove his travelling cap—not that I should discover the slightest scar on *his* forehead—I should then be completely reassured. (*Suddenly*). Pardon me—is not that a friend of yours bowing to you on the other platform? (*indicating the audience*).

GENTLEMAN. Bowing to me? where? (*putting his hand to his cap*).

LADY (*pointing*). There! (*Aside*). Now for it!

GENTLEMAN (*lowering his hand again without removing his cap*). No, ma'am, I don't know him—besides, he's not bowing to me.

LADY (*aside*). That's a failure!

GENTLEMAN. Hallo! Somebody's been moving my things!

LADY. Yes, the guard!—he seemed curious—I might say anxious—to ascertain if your name was on your travelling bag!

GENTLEMAN. Very inquisitive of him! Why should I make my name public property?—there may be reasons why I should not!—pressing reasons! You can understand that, madam?

LADY. Y—es! I'm afraid I can—I mean, of course I can!

GENTLEMAN. But, as I was saying, the interest you have so kindly taken in me—a perfect stranger—

LADY (*very quickly*). Not at all, sir; on the contrary! No—that is—

GENTLEMAN. Permit me to continue. That interest, I repeat, comes naturally to *you*, blessed, as I'm sure you are, with so sweet, so gentle, so affectionate a disposition.

LADY (*very quickly*). Quite the reverse, I assure you, sir—I've a dreadful temper!

GENTLEMAN. Again: that charming hand is not less characteristic—it requires but one glance at those delicately-tapered fingers— (*about to take her hand; Lady hastily withdraws it*).

LADY (*aside*). I do believe the man's going to make love to me!

GENTLEMAN. But stay—I see one line here that is singularly prominent—permit me (*taking Lady's hand*).

LADY (*aside*). I'm quite at his mercy! Not the slightest use my screaming!

GENTLEMAN (*looking at her hand*). Yes, a very sudden intersection, threatening, I fear, some personal danger.

LADY (*alarmed*). Yes—very likely! (*aside*). How intently he fixes his eyes on my diamond ring!

GENTLEMAN. But were you not saying that you had once been exposed to some peril in travelling?

LADY. Yes; but I was not *alone* then.

GENTLEMAN. The "late lamented," I presume?

LADY. Yes; we were attacked by robbers in crossing the

Pyrenees ! (*very quickly*). Not that I particularly object to robbers ! In fact, I rather like them ! (*aside*). I may as well try what a little flattery will do.

GENTLEMAN (*still holding her hand*). You have a remarkably fine diamond here, madam !

LADY. Yes, a very good *imitation*, isn't it ?

GENTLEMAN. Excuse me. I cannot mistake a diamond—no, no ; I've had too many pass through my hands to do that !

LADY (*aside*). I'm afraid he has !

GENTLEMAN. And yet there's a flaw in it—if you'll allow me, I'll point it out to you (*looking about—then suddenly taking up the paper knife—the Lady screams*). I'm afraid I alarmed you !

LADY (*trying to be calm*). Oh dear no ! and if you've quite done examining my hand—

GENTLEMAN. Quite, madam ! (*releasing her hand*).

LADY. And you detect no further threatening of—personal danger ?

GENTLEMAN. None whatever !

LADY. Then you are a believer in spiritualism, and phrenology, and all that sort of thing ?

GENTLEMAN. Certainly I am ! May I ask, madam, if you have ever examined the head of a criminal ?

LADY (*shocked*). Never, sir !

GENTLEMAN. Perhaps you have never even been brought into personal contact with one ?

LADY. Certainly not, sir ; though I'm sure I should feel the greatest pity for him—I should indeed ! (*in a commiserating tone*).

GENTLEMAN. Understand me ; I don't allude to the *milder* class of criminals, such as thieves, robbers, forgers, burglars, and such like ; but one of those desperate fellows who—who—in fact, who *stick at nothing* ! By-the-by, I have a collection here of photographs of some of our most notorious criminals, which I think would interest you.

LADY (*shuddering*). Yes—intensely !

GENTLEMAN (*opening his travelling bag*). Ah ! (*producing a revolver*) there's rather a curious story connected with this revolver !

LADY (*alarmed, and trying to look unconcerned*). Indeed ?

GENTLEMAN. I never travel without one—every chamber loaded and ready for use, so that I have six lives at my disposal—a very comfortable feeling to have ! Don't you think so ?

LADY. Yes, very much so indeed !

GENTLEMAN. Here are the photographs (*producing packet*) ; here is one of them (*about to show a portrait*). No, I make a mistake ; this is one of myself.

LADY (*aghast*). Yours ?

GENTLEMAN (*smiling*). Yes ! this is the one ! (*presenting a second portrait*). You'll observe a remarkable protuberance of this part of the skull (*pointing to it*) ; that's the organ of destructiveness—I have it myself, only not *quite* so strongly developed ! (*touching his head*)—don't you perceive it ?

LADY. Yes—I—see ! But I confess I cannot understand how you happen to be in possession of these *remarkably interesting*—works of art ?

GENTLEMAN (*smiling*). A very simple matter—my occupation necessitates my associating with this particular class of "Her Majesty's subjects"—as I happen to be—

LADY (*quickly*). Hush ! I know ! You need not tell me !

GENTLEMAN (*anxiously*). What is the matter ? You are positively trembling—with cold, no doubt ! Allow me to wrap this rug round you.

LADY. No, no !

GENTLEMAN. Nay, I insist ! (*placing his rug round Lady's feet*).

LADY. But you will feel the want of it yourself, especially as it seems you have passed the night in the train !

GENTLEMAN. Exactly ! Six hours ago I was in Dartmoor Prison !

LADY. Dartmoor ! (*aside*). He confesses it !

GENTLEMAN (*smiling*). Not a very attractive residence—I would gladly have left it before, but, unfortunately, I was detained !

LADY. Detained !

GENTLEMAN (*smiling*). I may say *chained* to it—by my confounded profession !

LADY (*aside*). He calls it a *profession* !

GENTLEMAN. There's no saying how long the Home Secretary might have kept me there ; but I couldn't stand it any longer, so I managed to make my escape, and now I'm free once more !

LADY (*suddenly starting up with a scream*). Stop, sir ! Don't say any more ! Have pity on me, for mercy's sake ! (*falling on her knees and clasping her hands*).

GENTLEMAN (*astounded*). My dear madam—

LADY (*hysterically*). I know who you are—I know all about the scar on your forehead !—but I won't betray you—I won't, indeed ! Here, take my purse !—take my watch ! (*thrusting the articles into the Gentleman's hands*)—all I have, good Mr. Burkshaw !—but spare my life !

GENTLEMAN. Your life ? Mr. Burkshaw ? What—what do you mean ?

LADY. Mercy ! mercy !

GENTLEMAN (*seriously*). My dear madam ! Pray compose yourself ! You have evidently fallen into some strange error—in a word, I happen to be—

LADY. Yes, yes! I know who you happen to be! Take my advice and jump out of the train!

GENTLEMAN (*astonished*). Jump out of the train? Madam, your strange conduct compels me to be serious! In a word, I have the honour to be a Government Inspector of Prisons!

LADY. Eh? What? You—an Inspector of Prisons?

GENTLEMAN. Yes, madam (*taking off his cap and bowing to Lady*).

LADY (*eagerly looking at Gentleman's forehead*). And—you haven't got a scar on your forehead? Oh, sir! if you only knew how delighted I am that you haven't got a scar on your forehead!

GENTLEMAN (*bewildered*). A scar on my forehead? (*feeling his forehead*). But may I ask what has suggested to you all these notions about thieves and robbers?

LADY. Why, you've been talking about nothing else for the last quarter of an hour!

GENTLEMAN (*smiling*). I beg your pardon. You certainly first began the conversation about these—gentlemen.

LADY. Because you said that you associated with them.

GENTLEMAN. Naturally, as an inspector of prisons.

LADY. Then those portraits—in your possession?

GENTLEMAN. Were taken merely to forward the ends of justice!

LADY (*with a sigh of relief*). I understand it all. I can laugh at my folly now, which entirely arose from this silly newspaper paragraph—the sole cause of all my absurd terror.

GENTLEMAN. What newspaper paragraph?

LADY. Read this, sir (*giving him newspaper*).

GENTLEMAN (*looking at paper, and then giving way to a loud laugh*). Ha, ha, ha! Why, my dear madam, this is quite an old story! Our interesting friend, Mr. Burkshaw, happened to be shot in attempting his escape from Dartmoor more than twelve months ago! (*looking at date of newspaper*). Of course, this paper is a year old—December, 1884!

LADY. So it is! Oh, sir! what must you think of me?

GENTLEMAN (*in a tender tone*). May I tell you? That you are the most charming travelling companion—

(*Here noise of train stopping, engine, railway whistle, &c., &c., heard.*)

VOICE (*outside*). Victoria! All tickets ready!

(*Lady and Gentleman both rise.*)

GENTLEMAN (*gallantly*). I am staying some time in London, madam. Will you permit me to call upon you, if only to remove from your mind any lingering doubt as to my perfect identity?

LADY. With pleasure, sir! (*suddenly, and in a very gracious tone*). Oh, sir! how very good of you to be a Government In-

spector of Prisons ! (*holding out her hand to Gentleman, who takes it and raises it to his lips.*)

Voice (again heard). All tickets ready !

The Gentleman and Lady gather their packages and bow to each other as the

CURTAIN FALLS.

For permission to act this piece apply to the Author by letter, to the care of MESSRS. KELLY & Co., 51, Great Queen Street, W.C.

GORDON, 1885.

HE lived a life a lesson for all time,
In golden letters writ for man's behoof,
A help to all who stand, or feign would upward climb,
Temptation proof !

Thro' weary months of watching all alone,
Thro' daily patience and thro' daily toil,
Dauntless against a host ; and he but one,
Unconquerably loyal !

Eternal God ! Fount of eternal power,
Whence streams perennial flow of living strength for man,
No might but thine could help him in that fatal hour
When treachery began !

That when at last death came to him,
Which he so oft had faced with fearless smile,
The rest of heaven was his ; and all grown dim
Th' immeasurable trial !

Alas for England, that her noblest son
At such an hour, had no one by his side !
What crooked counsels worked, that England mourns alone,
And Gordon died ?

Farewell, thou fearless heart, at last set free
From all the trammels of this mortal frame,
Altho' thou sought'st it not—Time brings to thee
Imperishable fame !

Yet if in realms beyond our ken, thou 'st passed
To other worlds perchance still reached by earthly bonds,
The wail of England hear ; and thence—thy mantle cast
Upon her sons !

GLIMPSES OF OUT-OF-WORK LONDON.

AS SEEN BY BIBLE-WOMEN AND NURSES.

ALTHOUGH this paper appears in April, it took form in the writer's mind during the last fortnight of February, when the cry of the Unemployed was resounding throughout the kingdom, and when the daily press was reserving space for the Mansion House Fund and the details of its distribution.

Let us hope that things will be looking up a bit before these words are in print.

"The Unemployed"—to use the current phrase—form collectively a subject far too large and involving too many grave and intricate questions for me even to attempt to discuss, here or elsewhere. I therefore propose merely to put before you a few phases of the present distress that have either come under my own personal observation, or have been reported to me by those who are constantly in and out of working-class homes.

The sad facts we have to lay before you shall be presented in as simple and undressed-up way as possible. They will only be interesting by reason of their terrible truthfulness.

And first:—Where is Out-of-Work London? "Oh, why, in the East-End, of course!"

True, certainly, as far as it goes, but a long way from the whole truth. One of the most heart-rending appeals our Mission has received this winter came from an outlying, almost suburban district in the far west, and represented, not one or two cases, but a large and respectable out-of-work population.

One man in this same neighbourhood, after some months of want of employment and more than semi-starvation, at last found work. A day or two afterwards his wife thought his manner very strange; he took to breaking up his bloater into little bits and putting it in his tea, and very soon went quite out of his mind. He is now in an asylum. Alas! he is only one among too many we know, who, after long suffering, have broken down when the coveted work has come at last, but too late. No, Out-of-Work London is not the East End only. It extends through every one of the postal districts, not excepting even the E.C. Not excepting the E.C. did I say? If you heard the stories that reach us from the densely-crowded "Cabinet-Makers' Land" that lies between Shoreditch and Finsbury, you would imagine that poverty could reach no deeper depths than among the dwellers of that

district just without the boundaries of the City of London itself. We have several devoted women at work there. One nurse said to us the other day, "I feel ashamed to look my people in the face ; they're in such distress, and it's so little I can do for them."

We help her from the Mother House as much as we can ; but our work is all over London, and we are not a Relief Society, although we have a Sickness and Help Fund, which brings comfort to many a sick and starving family.

"Well, nurse, what do you do for them ? "

"Why, ma'am, when I get a little money from the Mission, I buy a cow's heel and some vegetables and make a good strong soup, and take it to those who are the worst off. How they manage to live I'm sure I don't know. It's been a heart-breaking winter—and so long ! "

I ought perhaps to say here that the nurses are allowed cereal food and beef-tea for their invalids ; but how can one feed whole families ? Yet how terrible it is to see the hungry children or the husband looking on while the sick mother or child has a meal ! No wonder Bible-women and nurses come up to the Mother House and beg for help with tears in their eyes ! Never are they refused while it is possible to help them. And very thankful has the Mission been this winter that, largely through the kindness of working men in work, they have been able to give much more help than usual.

Perhaps before I go any farther I had better tell you a little about our Mission. Its name, unfortunately, is a great deal too long—"The London Bible and Domestic Female Mission." "Bible-women and Nurses" is shorter, and perhaps more to the point.

Somewhere about thirty years ago, Mrs. Ranyard, better known as L. N. R., took her first walk, one sultry July day, through the now demolished rookeries of St. Giles's. Unused to the London slums, she was perfectly staggered and horror-stricken by what she saw and heard—by the crowds, the poverty, the vice, the dirt.

Nearly every one else would have repeated the questions that have been asked in pity and dismay so many thousands of times, "How do they all live ? How are they all fed ? " But to Mrs. Ranyard's mind a still more pressing inquiry arose. "How," she asked—it was so entirely characteristic of her—so quite her own way of looking at things—"how are these crowds of people in their endless courts and alleys supplied with the Bible ? How do they get the Bread of Life ? What do they know of the Message from God ? "

Out of the answer arose the Bible-woman. From the Bible-woman's visit sprang the mothers' meeting, the domestic mission, the clothing club, the nurse, and the lady to superintend all.

This Mission now works throughout London. Bible-women and nurses are chosen from among the working people, and just as in the higher classes the clergyman or pastor becomes the

centre of a social circle, so does the Bible-woman or nurse in her humbler sphere. Taken as a whole, I should think that no society in London is more intimately acquainted with the homes of the poor than is our Mission ; which works from the far east, London beyond the Lea, Canning Town and Barking Road, to long past the distant south-west Wandsworth, the London on the Wandle ; from the Holloway under the northern heights to desperately out-of-work Deptford and Greenwich miles below Bridge.

Ask any of the women engaged on this vast field whether there is more than the usual amount of distress in their districts this winter, and they will simply open their eyes wide with astonishment at the question.

"Why, nearly everybody's out of work!" they will exclaim. "And it isn't as if they had had anything like a summer to make up for last winter. They've been out of work so long; that's where it is."

"But yet," you say, "the returns do not show much increase in pauperism. How is this?" To which the answer, gathered from great part of London is :

"Because this unusual distress presses the most severely on the upper-class artisan, who would submit to almost any privation rather than apply for parish relief. Chronic penury is always with us, but the bitter destitution of this winter is crushing the very life out of many a family, who have, until the last few months, been used to many a home comfort ; men who for years have held one situation, now are either discharged or are only doing an occasional day's work."

I am, myself, constantly visiting with our Bible-women and nurses in different parts of London. I have seen many an out-of-work family lately, and witnessed the dull despair that settles down upon the parents, especially upon the father.

One man's face haunts me now, as I write, although it is some weeks since I saw him and I have paid very many visits since. He was sitting by a small fire in a neat and clean little room in a south London court. A pale-faced little child was by his knee, another wee thing was clinging to its mother, who, poor woman, was dreading the arrival of that inevitable other one, who always comes at the most inconvenient times, and saw nothing but the workhouse before her.

The husband had been years in one good situation ; he had been out of work for months. Some little time before, unable to stand the sight of his wife and children and almost mad with distress and want of food, he had stayed away from his home for days ; now he was sitting by the fire the picture of despair ; the dreary, lifeless look in his pallid downcast face and averted eyes was a far stronger appeal to my sympathy than any words could have been.

They were just going to have a meal of bread and a weak beverage they called tea, to buy which they had sold one of their few remaining dishes for twopence. The elder children had been to a free dinner, but there had been no breakfast for them nor for any one else of that household.

"They said, how could we be so cruel as to send them to school without a bit of bread?" the mother told me sadly, adding, "But how could we help it? As if we shouldn't have given it to them, poor little dears, if we'd only got it!"

We left them a trifle to go on with. The new baby arrived a few hours after we had left; but the mother did not have to go to the dreaded workhouse as we had a nurse on the district who was able to look after her, supply her with ready-cooked food, and help in many other ways.

People of this kind, really good, struggling working folks, are most wonderfully grateful for anything that is done for them. The smallest kindness seems to take them by surprise, and to be altogether delightful to them, whereas for the Hereditary Grand Pauper and his brood you never can do enough.

This worthy woman did not know how to express her thanks to our Mission; she could only say with the most touching gratitude, "All my wants have been met!"

This inevitable new baby is indeed a terrible addition to the troubles of an out-of-work family. Poor little being! his clothes are too often in pawn before he has ever had them on, or only his mother knows what she has had to go without to keep them for him.

He and his mother occupy a large proportion of the reports we receive every week. We have to keep a cupboard full of little things ready for him at our Mission House, No. 2, Adelphi Terrace. This is a specimen or two of how he is mentioned in our reports, only you must multiply him by hundreds.

"We went with nurse to Mrs. Denham. This poor woman looked as if she were far gone in consumption; she was also suffering from muscular rheumatism. Nurse washed the new baby, but there was nothing but rags to dress him in. The husband had been out of work a long while, and everything that could be taken to the pawn-shop had been taken there—even the baby's things were gone to get the necessaries of life. The room looked painfully bare; there were three other children. The mother is so thankful for the Mission's gift."

Here is another similar case:

"The poor mother was so thankful for the set of baby-things sent her from the Mission. There were three other children, and the husband had been out of work for eight months. They seem very, very poor. We heard a most sad tale of poverty, and the appearance of the mother, room, and bed showed it was but too true. The mother seems a nice sort of woman, and comes from

the country. With delight she told us that last week her husband had earned ten shillings after eight months of want of work.

"When he placed the money in my hand," said the poor woman, "I couldn't believe it, and I had to look again and again to see that it really was ten shillings. I couldn't believe that I had ten shillings again!"

These are the scenes that have been witnessed very often this winter, but not only in courts and alleys and on the top storeys of great industrial "models," but behind the neat white curtains or green Venetians in really pretty, well-built little houses in the long rows that now stand acre after acre, where only a few years since rhubarb and celery flourished, and which you may see from the carriages of nearly every railway that leaves London.

"If it wasn't for my old woman we should all be starved," said an out-of-work labourer in court the other day at the Socialist trial. A great many men can say the same just now; and where it is not the women of the family who are engaged in the final struggle with the all but victorious wolf, then it is the boy. Boys, on the whole, have been doing fairly this winter. Alas! in many cases they are taking the place of men permanently. They can manage some machines just as well, and work for much lower wages. So the man with a family to keep is turned off; the boy thinks his money enough to marry on, and things go from bad to worse.

As for women's work, it is a mockery to speak of its being "paid for" at all; but the astonishing cheerfulness with which they will toil for an average twopence an hour, the interest they will take in describing the details of the most monotonous task to any one who will listen with sympathy, is indeed wonderful, and may well put many a comparatively well-paid grumbler to shame.

Visiting in Shadwell the other day I found a good, honest woman, with a delicate out-of-work husband, and quite a small tribe of children, stitching away at the lining of huge great coats for the Servian Government. Sixpence she gets for the "finishing," and even her quick fingers must take three hours to get one done; yet she could smile and even joke.

"Why, bless me," she said, "these foreigners must be rare fine men, for some of these coats measure more than four yards round the waist."

To me it is truly wonderful that under such circumstances these women can smile, but they can and do, only sometimes one fancies their smiles are near akin to tears.

In the same neighbourhood I met a neat little girl who was taking home a great bundle of work unlike any I had seen before. She told me the bundle was full of little muslin shrimp bags; sixpence would be the price paid for the whole.

But there too often comes a time when even these poor earnings have to cease. The wife and mother has been keeping the home

a little together at the expense of her own health, perhaps even of her life. Such a one a nurse found recently very ill in bed and swollen with dropsy, brought on by cold upon cold, which had been neglected while she was overworking herself. The little home still looked tidy, but alas for the price paid for it !

The agony that decent, hard-working men and women will go through before yielding to the illness that will compel them to join the ranks of the out-of-work is indeed awful. Not long since I called on a man in the Drury Lane district who was laid up at home and still suffering severely.

"Many a time," he said, "before I knocked off, I've stood at my bench biting my lips till the blood came."

I had written thus far yesterday when I was obliged to break off.

This morning I went up to our Centre, or, as we prefer to call it, the Mother House. I have just returned with several fresh items, some of which I will proceed to write down.

To begin with I will take you to a little old-fashioned four-roomed house in the ancient city of Westminster ; not quite under the Abbey's shadow, but not much beyond it. Here live an elderly jobbing tailor and his elderly wife. The "jobbing" is on a very humble scale, sixpence being as a rule the limit of pay. But ever since Christmas the sixpences, or even fourpences, have not been coming in, and so the poor old people are now very badly off.

One day last week the old husband set out to look for work, and the old wife set out to see what she could find for dinner at next to nothing. Going along she met a working man of her acquaintance, whom she told of her distress.

Now it so happened that this good man was in work. Said he :

"Our guv'nor and us chaps we make a collection every week, and we send it up to the Bible Ladies at Adelphi Terrace, and they give it away. Very kind ladies they are too, and they don't keep people waiting neither. Shouldn't wonder but if you was to write up to them they'd give you some of our money."

The old wife took the address, went home, and told her husband as soon as he returned.

"Don't," he said. "We'll struggle on a week longer."

But the wife was disobedient and wrote. The letter arrived on Saturday night, and on Monday one of our most valued workers at the Mother House was sent off to Westminster with some money and coal-tickets, and found everything just as the letter had represented.

The poor old wife was quite overjoyed at the success of her application.

"But," she said, "the people downstairs are much worse off than we are, for they have eight children, and I don't believe any

of them have had any food to-day. The father's gone out looking for work with scarcely a bit of shoe to his foot, and the children will be coming in from school presently, and I'm afraid there'll be nothing for them."

Now here I must absolutely permit myself a digression, while with the greatest caution I lift one little corner of the veil of secrecy with which our visitor must be shrouded. My fingers, as well as my mind, positively long to be painting her portrait! If the British public could once but catch a glimpse of her kind, cannie Scotch face when she is out on an errand of mercy there might be a run on all the banks, so eager would every one who could or could not spare a shilling for the Unemployed be to get her to lay it out!

"Well then, we'll just have the poor thing up," she said, when she had heard of the people downstairs. So they had her up; the surmise of her upstairs friend was but too true; the whole family had not broken their fast, and there was nothing for the children.

"Then ye'll just step over to the butcher's at once and get some pieces, and then ye'll get some potatoes and make a stew for them," said the visitor, when she had heard the mother's story.

The poor woman was a very decent body, but quite at her wits' ends. She thawed, however, very quickly at the sight of the coin and the kindly face, and the sound of the pleasant northern voice.

"And when will your husband be in, and what have you got for him?" continued the visitor.

The questions banished the gleam of brightness the vision of stew for the children had brought to the poor woman's face.

She answered the last one first.

"There's nothing but a bit of dry bread for him," she said; "and he won't be home before seven, or perhaps eight."

"Aye! But that'll be late for a man to be out when he's not at work," said the visitor.

"Yes, it's late," returned the wife dismally; then with an effort she went on, "To tell you the truth, he's been coming home every night cold and hungry; and when he's come home I've been cold and hungry too, and so have the children, and—" (miserably)—"I've jawed him! Now he don't come in till he's forced to it."

"Then ye'll just go and get some tea and sugar and a bit of meat that you can cook when he comes in to-night, poor man; and that'll be better than ja'ing him, won't it? And I'll be looking in again in a few days just to see how you're getting along."

I feel perfectly certain that the woman did as the visitor told her, because it would not be in human nature to refuse obedience.

I must tell you that I am the mere literary woman of the Mission; but I am sometimes allowed the privilege of going over

districts. I am a born Londoner, and no part of the great city is without deep interest for me. London has been a study and a hobby with me nearly all my life, and there are several ways in which I can help forward this quiet, somewhat old-fashioned Bible-loving and human-being-loving Mission. Sometimes I go for a long walk, or prowl by myself in an out-of-the-way neighbourhood and look about me, before I place myself in the hands of those who know the district well.

I took one of these long walks about a fortnight since, and the walk was impressed upon me by the severe cold I managed to catch ; for a nipping day it was, and if ever a "nor'-easter" blew up the Thames and along Wapping Wall and round the peninsula men now call Rotherhithe, it blew that day.

"Have you much distress in your neighbourhood ?" I recently asked of a gentleman who carries on a large business at Wapping Wall. I put the question, although I knew what the answer would be ; but I was hardly prepared for the sudden change in his expression and the earnestness with which he replied, hurriedly, and as if I had touched an over-sensitive nerve :

"Distress ! Aye, distress indeed ! You should see them at the dock gates fighting like wild beasts when there's a call ! You should hear them yell when they know how few of them are wanted !"

Fighting and yelling like wild beasts !

And for what ?

Twopence per hour !

On the bitter morning I refer to I walked along Wapping Wall, between two towering rows of gigantic warehouses joined here and there by flying bridges. Little enough was doing ; cheerless looked the long black basements, open both to Thames and street, framing in the cold grey river. Groups of men, wretchedly clad, stood leaning against every wall, or stamped up and down trying in vain to get some little warmth into their numbed limbs.

Many a pile of fine and comparatively new buildings was to let ; many another closed, barred, and bolted.

The cause is not hard to find.

The commerce and the ships of London have outgrown London's Pool.

I called on several people with the Bible-woman, but everywhere we found extreme poverty, and yet so bravely concealed that only those who knew the decent homes well quite knew how sharp was the pinch endured. Wonderfully patient and uncomplaining are hundreds of such men and women as we constantly meet with. To let their poverty be known is to them almost worse than want itself. One poor woman who was in great straits—for living in a Peabody block the rent had to be found as regularly as Monday morning came—said only a day or two ago

to one of our workers who had helped her a little, "We never let any one know about our troubles. I have a good husband and we talk to each other, for we have no friend in London." Experienced Bible-women and nurses and others who are constantly visiting such homes, know, however, a good deal without being told. They do not expect to find among decent folks those striking pictures of want that appeal so strongly to the amateur "slummer," or the draughtsmen of sensational wood-cuts.

Shadwell Street Market, through which I passed, offered a very sharp contrast to the respectable homes we had just visited. It was about noon, the streets were literally crowded with a dense population whose general squalor you might perhaps equal in other parts of London, but which it would be hard indeed to surpass. Here are to be seen numberless women with thin black shawls in the last stage of shabbiness over their unkempt heads, the girls with heavy fringes that actually come down to their eyelids, the loafing men and boys, the barefooted ragged children that make up the crowd of a market street. A sad and disreputable sight it is even taken as a whole, but there are little bits of it perfectly loathsome in their vileness. For instance, a corner gin-shop, which local custom has given up almost entirely to women—if you can so call the beings that crawl in and out of it or stand about its bar, and a bit of low brazen-face sweet-hearting so absolutely Hogarthian in its repulsiveness that it was like a sudden flash from the eighteenth century, a corner of one of Hogarth's pictures come to life.

These are indeed "the dregs." Little can be done for them; but there are above them thousands who are fighting with all their might against the all but overwhelming odds that are beating them down into the vile ranks beneath them. These are the people we wish to help. Poor things, how they clutch at a straw!

Passing through the Thames Tunnel in an East London train, a few minutes landed me at Rotherhithe on the south bank of the Thames.

Rotherhithe is the peninsula formed by the first bend of the Thames below Bridge. Like the Isle of Dogs on the other side, this peninsula is so cut up by docks and timber ponds that it now consists far more of water than of land, but, as Mr. Besant has shown in his "Captain's Room," one can find a great many interesting persons and things within this riparian parish.

A street which is not unlike a much-extended and gently-curving Wapping Wall follows the river line. It is called Rotherhithe Street, and the first time you go along it you constantly fancy it is coming to an end as constantly to find it is not. This is owing to its way of being always just round the corner.

Enormous granaries flank both sides of the street for a considerable distance. When trade is brisk the roadway is scarcely passable, so close do the heavily-laden waggons follow each other.

There was, however, plenty of room, and a great deal too much to spare on the morning of my visit.

Later I called on an elderly man who had worked in one of those granaries for many years. He made half a day's work last week.

"I never see anything like it all the time I've worked by the waterside," he told me. "Me and some of my mates we were standing on Cherry Garden Pier this morning, and the remark was passed that the Pool looked quite naked. You could see London Bridge and the other side just as plain as them houses opposite. There was no craft—to speak of—at all in the Pool. Never see anything like it! Why, there's *one* granary open between the Bridge and Cherry Garden Pier!"

(This was in February, you must remember.)

Leaving the granaries you come to the huge timber docks and ponds with the names of the great wood-producing countries. There were the ponds and there were the gigantic piles of timber; but where were the buyers, where the great waggons? The timber trade was just then as dead as the grain trade. A boy or a clerk or two turned out of the wide yards when a distant bell announced that in other parts of the world there was still a little doing.

It was a truly melancholy sight!

Now between the timber ponds of the Surrey Commercial Docks and High Street, Borough, there are hundreds of streets and tens of thousands of little houses, for the most part occupied by respectable working people, many of whom depend upon the granaries, docks, and other waterside work, or belong to trades connected with these great businesses.

What can stagnation by the riverside mean to the dwellers in these countless streets, except at first poverty and at last destitution?

One of our Bible-women, who has worked at Rotherhithe now for seventeen years, says that forty streets of neat little houses have been built since she first began to visit here.

She is an indefatigable house-to-house visitor. There have been cases in which she has made a weekly call at one door for a whole year before admission has been gained; but then sickness or sorrow has opened the long-closed door to the Bible-woman, and the occupants of the house have been only too thankful to see her and accept help from her.

Here is a case she found only quite recently. The father was a plasterer by trade, but for three winters he had done very little, and all this winter he had been out of work. The building trade of Rotherhithe and Bermondsey has been in a bad way for some time, and first-rate workmen are often out of work, even when the weather is open.

This plasterer and his family were not only in want, but had

parted with everything. They had literally nothing—not a bed, not even a morsel to eat. The Bible-woman took them in some ready-cooked food, and they offer to pay her for it with pawn-tickets. Then she got a neighbour to stuff some sacks with shavings and make them a sort of bedding, and, reporting them to the Mission, they have been very considerably helped.

Another of our friends found a mother and her children actually crying for food, and the mother was just going to take a couple of cups, nearly all she had left, to sell to get a few mouthfuls. The visitor gave one of the children a penny as she stood talking, and the way the little creature looked up in her face told too sad a tale. "You can't think what it has been sometimes this winter," said a young woman to me a week or two ago in one of these respectable South London houses, "when some one has given our little boy a penny when we've had nothing at all in the house!"

"Only a penny!" we say who have perhaps never known the want of one; yet for a penny a woman will make an umbrella-cover and put it on its frame; for a penny she will make twenty-four button-holes and put on eighteen buttons—and what the lack of that penny means only those can know who have felt the want of it.

What is to be done to meet all this distress? The little spurt of charity is soon exhausted; the first touch of Spring will make too many kind-hearted but ill-informed persons fancy that all is right again. Alas, there is many and many a once bright home that will never again be what it was! The gales of this winter will leave behind them an amount of human wreckage terrible to contemplate.

Helpful individual friendship and friendliness with the sufferers, the strong, kind heart that against hope still hopes on for others, and again and again takes to those who are cast down the Divine message, "There is lifting up!"—this, *practically carried out*, will be the only means of restoring the survivors of this winter's storms.

These Glimpses of Out-of-Work London have truly been sad enough. I trust by next month I may have some break in the dark clouds to report. At present it is snowing again, and it is Saturday. Do you know what that must mean to Out-of-Work London?

(*To be continued.*)

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THE HEART'S WEAKNESS.
A STUDY FROM ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.
BY WALTER J. ALLEN.

[See page 428.]